E.B.Browning.

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Class 1. Xmas 1892

A M Henderson

ALLMAN & SON LIMITED LONDON

POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT

ROUTLEDGE'S BRITISH POETS.

CHAUCER.
SHAKSPERE.
MILTON.
BURNS.
COWPER.
BYRON.
SCOTT.
WORDSWORTH.
SHELLEY.
MOORE.
MRS. HEMANS.
HOOD.
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Frontispiece.

POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT

(Mrs. E. B. Browning)

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, Limited

Broadway, Ludgate Hill

GLASGOW, MANCHESTER, AND NEW YORK

1891

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

Dedication.

TO MY FATHER.

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world: nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that you, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name, —may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile, —and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.—Your

E. B. B.

London, 50 Wimpole Street.
1844.

PREFACE.

THE collection here offered to the public, consists of Poems which have been written in the interim between the period of the publication of my "Seraphim" and the present; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression,—and, with the exception of a few contributions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the "Drama of Exile," is the longest and most important work (to *me!*) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating "groan of the whole creation,"—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And

I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the Idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear up the contrary Idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done, I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling,—and I, without, with my EXILES,—*I* also an exile! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow,—till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture, by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground; they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes; yet they neither imitated their Homer, nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, who died in the bath, did no harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer, who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation,—whereas Milton's was his own by illustration only,

—I appeal. To this analogy—*not* to this comparison, be it understood,—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker ; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and transfigured ; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any. A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a rude familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out, "Profane." Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic ; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing the "Heavenly Love" among the persons of his drama, is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spiritual creed,—to separate the worshipping from the acting man,—and by no means to "live by faith." There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated fingers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word God were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points, which I will not argue, from the conventions of the Christian to his devout heart ; and I beseech him generously to believe of me, that I have done that in reverence, from

which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place,—the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the east, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the Flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, ערב of Genesis, signifies a "mingling," and approaches the meaning of our "twilight" analytically. Apart from which considerations, my "exiles" are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them, are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the "Drama of Exile" in the collection, is the "Vision of Poets," in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles: and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea, is eating deeper and more fatally into our literature, than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called "la patience angélique du génie;" and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my "Seraphim" was received by the public with more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something indeed I

may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort—since "we learn in suffering what we teach in song,"—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better,—and I feel as if I might do better: I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me:—and if I cry out too hopefully at sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults,—as I go forward to my critics and confess,—they have my heart and life in them,—they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work,—not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being,—but as the completest expression of that being, to which I could attain,—and as work I offer it to the public,—feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration,—but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done, should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

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A DRAMA OF EXILE.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ADAM.
EVE.
GABRIEL.
LUCIFER.

Angels.
Eden Spirits.
Earth Spirits and Phantasms.

CHRIST in a Vision.

A Drama of Exile.

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with clouds, from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire self-moved. A watch of innumerable* Angels, *rank above rank, slopes up from around it to the zenith; and the glare, cast from their brightness and from the sword, extends many miles into the wilderness.* ADAM *and* EVE *are seen in the distance, flying along the glare. The* ANGEL GABRIEL *and* LUCIFER *are beside the gate.*

Lucifer. Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of the gate!
Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,
I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.
Gabriel. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light
Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath,—
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls;—
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages; whence to mark despair,
And measure out the distances from good!
Go from us straightway.
Lucifer. Wherefore?
Gabriel. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place, trod sorrow up.
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this sword.
Lucifer. Angels are in the world—wherefore not I?
Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?
The cursed are in the world—wherefore not I!
Gabriel. Depart.
Lucifer. And where's the logic of "depart"?
Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt

To fix my postulate better. Dost thou dream
Of guarding some monopoly in Heaven
Instead of earth? Why, I can dream with thee
To the length of thy wings.

Gabriel. I do not dream.
This is not Heaven, even in a dream; nor earth,
As earth was once,—first breathed among the stars,—
Articulate glory from the mouth divine,—
To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly,
Touched like a lute-string,—and the sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
Is earth, not new created, but new cursed—
This, Eden's gate, not opened, but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the Serpent! this the sword
(This sword, alive with justice and with fire!)
That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel! Wherefore, angel, go . . . depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered.

Lucifer. By no means.
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on!
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;
It holds, like mine immortal. Presently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves as green
Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-tree—
We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
More eminent for shadow—for the rest
We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,
And temples, if it please you:—we'll have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run along
Right o'er the edges. And good Gabriel,
(Ye like that word Heaven!) *I* too have strength—
Strength to behold Him, and not worship Him;
Strength to fall from Him, and not cry on Him;
Strength to be in the universe, and yet
Neither God nor His servant. The red sign

Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,
Is God's sign that it bows not unto God;
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
Can bear more curse.

Gabriel. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel!

Lucifer. Well! and if it be,
I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitient, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to Heaven;
And leave me to the earth which is mine own
In virtue of her misery, as I hers,
In virtue of my ruin! turn from both,
That bright, impassive, passive angelhood;
And spare to read us backward any more
Of your spent hallelujahs.

Gabriel. Spirit of scorn!
I might say, of unreason! I might say,
That who despairs, acts; that who acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and space;
That who elects, assumes a something good
Which God made possible; that who lives, obeys
The law of a life-maker . . .

Lucifer. Let it pass!
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I stand up
And strike my brow against the crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say for that,
My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou.*

Gabriel. I kneel.

Lucifer. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy Heaven,
And leave my earth to me.

Gabriel. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely; and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows

The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love: His lightnings go abroad,
His pity may do so; His angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.

Lucifer. Verily,
I and my demons—who are spirits of scorn—
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benignest angel of you all.

Gabriel. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise,
While hate avengeth.

Lucifer. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in Heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for my wrist,
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne;
When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Drawn from the finite, speeding my descent;
When countless angel-faces, still and stern,
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens,
Adown the abysmal spaces; and I fell,
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
By the sight in your eyes;—'twas then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!

Gabriel. Yet, thou discrowned one, by the truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would give away
All,—save that truth, and His love over it,—
To lead thee home again into the light,
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars;
When their rays tremble round them with much song,
Sung in more gladness!

Lucifer. Sing, my morning star!
Last beautiful—last heavenly—that I loved!

If I could drench thy golden locks with tears
What were it to this angel?
Gabriel. What love is!
And now I have named God.
Lucifer. Yet, Gabriel,
By the lie in me which I keep myself,
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
Thou and I have not solved his problem yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
That red-clay and a breath! who must, forsooth,
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his trees
And running in his rivers, to make glad
His soul made perfect; if it were not for
The hope within thee, deeper than thy truth,
Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
Which affront Heaven with their vacuity?
Gabriel. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in Heaven
To suit thy bitter words. Glory and life
Fulfil their own depletions: and if God
Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in
A compensative splendour up the skies,
Flushing the starry arteries!
Lucifer. With a change!
So, let the vacant thrones, and gardens too,
Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
As ye translate that word, to the dethroned
And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,
That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,
Am here, and will not go; while there, along
The light to which ye flash the desert out,
Flies your adopted Adam! your red clay
In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this?
Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?

Against whose hand? In this last strife, methinks,
I am not a fallen angel!
Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?
Lucifer. Ay: I know they have fled
Wordless all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear, for burden on their backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cherubim
Shining against, not for them! and I know
They dare not look in one another's face,
As if each were a cherub!
Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?
Lucifer. Only as much as this:
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.
Gabriel. Nothing more?
Lucifer. Why so the angels taunt! What should be more?
Gabriel. God is more.
Lucifer. Proving what?
Gabriel. That He is God,
And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!
Lucifer. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin!
Gabriel. I charge thee by the memory of Heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God!
Lucifer. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.
Gabriel. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,
When up against the white shore of our feet,
The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
Of all that coil, roared outward into space
On thunder edges,—leave the earth to God.
Lucifer. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.
Gabriel. I charge thee by that mournful morning star

Which trembleth . . .
Lucifer. Hush! I will not hear thee speak
Of such things. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends,
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I assert my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men bend slow their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere
To ruffle their smooth manhood, and break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS,

(*Chanting from Paradise, while Adam and Eve fly across the Sword-glare*).

Harken, oh harken! let your souls, behind you,
Lean, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
O lost, beloved!
Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled angels,
They press and pierce:
Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—
Voice throbs in verse!
We are but orphaned Spirits left in Eden,
A time ago—
God gave us golden cups; and we were bidden
To feed you so!
But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,
No work to do;
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining
The whole earth through;
And all those stains lie clearly round for showing
(Not interfused!)

That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,
Than shall be used.
Harken, oh harken ! ye shall harken surely,
For years and years,
The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,
Of spirits' tears !
The yearning to a beautiful, denied you,
Shall strain your powers :—
Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours !
In all your music, our pathetic minor
Your ears shall cross ;
And all fair sights shall mind you of diviner,
With sense of loss !
We shall be near, in all your poet-languors
And wild extremes ;
What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,
Or light with dreams !
And when upon you, weary after roaming,
Death's seal is put,
By the forgone ye shall discern the coming,
Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
Slow and solemn to your hearing !
Plane and cedar, palm and fir,
Tamarisk and juniper,
Each is throbbing in vibration
Since that crowning of creation,
When the God-breath spake abroad,
Pealing down the depths of Godhead,
Let us make man like to God.
And the pine stood quivering
In the Eden-gorges wooded,
As the awful word went by ;
Like a vibrant chorded string
Stretched from mountain-peak to sky !

And the cypress did expand,
Slow and gradual, branch and head;
And the cedar's strong black shade
Fluttered brokenly and grand!—
Grove and forest bowed aslant
In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
In the sunlight and the moonlight
Greenly sifted through the trees.
Ever wave the Eden trees
In the nightlight, and the noonlight,
With a ruffling of green branches
Shaded off to resonances;
Never stirred by rain or breeze!
Fare ye well, farewell!
The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before:
Farewell! the trees of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-Spirits.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
Hark the flow!
How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go,
Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,—
Of the banks
Where the green palms and red deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,

As if all would drink at once,
Where the living water runs!
Of the fishes' golden edges
Flashing in and out the sedges:
Of the swans on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding streams,
With impassive eyes turned shoreward,
And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotos leaning forward
To help them into dreams.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before:
Farewell! the streams of Eden,
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
That singeth in Eden after you;
And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail!
I sit upon a cypress-bough,
Close to the gate; and I fling my song
Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
Over the gate and after you!
And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas!
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.
And I build my song of high pure notes,
Note over note, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite;
And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
And something abides, and something floats,
In the song which I sing after you:

Fare ye well, farewell!
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before:
Farewell! the birds of Eden,
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng!
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas
Of blossom and bloom;
We call your thoughts home, as
Ye breathe our perfume;
To the amaranth's splendour
Afire on the slopes;
To the lily-bells tender,
And grey heliotropes!
To the poppy-plains, keeping
Such dream-breath and blé,
That the angels there stepping
Grew whiter to see!
To the nook, set with moly,
Ye jested one day in,
Till your smile waxed too holy,
And left your lips praying!
To the rose in the bower-place,
That dripped o'er you sleeping;
To the asphodel flower place,
Ye walked ankle deep in!
We pluck at your raiment,
We stroke down your hair,—
We faint in our lament,
And pine into air.
Fare ye well, farewell!

The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before:
Farewell! the flowers of Eden,
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence.* ADAM *and* EVE *fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark* ANGEL *passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge,
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?

Eve. I have strength to look upward to thy face.

Adam. We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal in a cloud. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side,—in pendulous horror slow,—
Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat
On the intermediate ground from that to this,
In still reflection of still splendour. They,
The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, dominations, princedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
On either side, and overhead the gate,—
Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
Set in an apex. That their faces shine
Betwixt the solemn claspings of their wings,
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—
We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them shine,

The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
To me, at least,—than could appear their light.
Adam. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
In a heap earthward; and thy body heaves
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!
Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
Seeing that I confess myself thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
Together with my name. Sweet, punish me!
O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said
My seed shall the first tempter's: strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden! and as HE,
Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord!
I, also, after tempting, writhe on ground;
And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
As suits me, O my tempted.
Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
My blessed life and light! If we have fallen,
It is that we have sinned,—we: God is just;
And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
It must be that His balance holds the weights
Of first and last sin on a level. What!
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—
Eve. For so, perchance, thy God

Might take thee into grace for scorning me ;
Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin !
And so, the blessed angels might come down
And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—
Because I was not near to make them sad,
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. THOU !

Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world
Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,
The best gift last ; the last sin was the worst,
Which sinned against more complement of gifts
And grace of giving. God ! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbèd hands,
And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty, and dominion, and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this life
Within life—this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation !

Eve. Is it thy voice ?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden ?

Adam. O my God !
I, standing here between the glory and dark,—
The glory of thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall ; the dark of our distress,
Which settles a step off in that drear world—
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*,
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise ;—
With angel looks and angel songs around,

To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness,
Without the uses of her comforting.

Eve. Or is it but a dream of thee, that speaks
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from Heaven, which doth accuse me,
And look up from the earth which doth convict me,
Into her face; and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love; and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds;
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart;
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus—
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath,
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides,
But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed:
My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;
The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet because
I know this strength of love, I seem to know
Death's strength by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul—
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay! and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life from me;
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
And weep so,—as if in a dream or prayer,—
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought
Which clipped my heart, and showed me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,

And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance, cast by swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
Rocking against each other—O Lord God!
('Twas so I prayed) I ask Thee by my sin,
And by Thy curse, and by Thy blameless heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from Thy face,
And from the face of my beloved here,
For whom I am no helpmete, quick away
Into the new dark mystery of death!
I will lie still there; I will make no plaint;
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,—
Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun,
Where peradventure I might sin anew
Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
Oh death, whate'er it be, is good enough
For such as I.—For Adam—there's no voice,
Shall ever say again, in Heaven or earth,
It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;
And God did use it for a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer:
Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes slant from Heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—

But the love-angels who came erst to us,
And when we said "GOD," fainted unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto God,
(As if He drew them inward in a breath)
His name being heard of them,—I think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
Invisible, but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
  Go upon your travel!
Heaven assist the Human
  Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
  Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
  Chanting down the Golden?
Do ye guess our choice is,
  Being unbeholden,
To be harkened by you, yet again?

This pure door of opal,
  God hath shut between us;
Us, His shining people,—
  You, who once have seen us,
And are blinded new!
  Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
  Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
  Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding.

With our presence glowed.
We came as if the Heavens were bowed
To a milder music rare!
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud;
While our wings, outspreading
Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or, abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendour
In either human face!
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands,
Breaking, with a sudden grace,
We took you unaware!
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Oft, when Heaven-descended,
Shut up in a secret light
Stood we speechless in your sight,
In a mute apocalypse!
With dumb vibrations on our lips,
From hosannas ended;
And grand half-vanishings
Of the forgone things,
Within our eyes, belated!
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from our Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opening into ministration.

Chorus.

Then in odes of burning,
Brake we suddenly,
And sang out the morning
Nobly up the sky.—
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
And taught them our intense Divine—
With our vital fiery notes
All disparted hither, thither,
Trembling out into the æther,—
Visible like beamy motes!—
Or, as twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,
The massive sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung!
While he, aweary and in swoon,
For joy to hear our climbing tune
Pierce the faint stars' concentric rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*Chant dies away confusedly, and enter* LUCIFER.

Lucifer. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree;
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam! hold
My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—
And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
And leave us to the desert thou hast made
Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime

Athwart this path kept holy to our tears,
Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.
Lucifer. Curse freely ! curses thicken. Why, this Eve
Who thought me once part worthy of her ear,
And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out
Around their continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And, down from her white heights of womanhood,
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.
Eve. So—speak wickedly !
I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt :
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn ;
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.
Lucifer. Our new gods, methinks,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies :
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery,
From all the wandering visions of the world,—
May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be ? Adam pardoned Eve.
Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both !
Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.
Lucifer. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly ! [*Aside.*
Eve. Hold thy wrath,

Beloved Adam! let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed,
When we were happy by them. So, depart;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our time
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
To harm us any more or scoff at us,
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face
To find it the communion of the dust
And issue of the curse,—Go.

Adam. At once, go.

Lucifer. Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?
What words are these to use? By what a thought
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!
To-day—what?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say!

Lucifer. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. *Thou!* The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes,
Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.
I think that thou hast one day worn a crown
Under the eyes of God.

Lucifer. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else! Verily, I think
Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely; but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin.

Lucifer. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I know more than I knew.
Now I know thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

Lucifer. Because?

Adam. Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million years,
Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

Lucifer. Who is high and bold—
Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower
Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!
Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that spirits should rise
Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
Whoever riseth must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Lucifer. Ha, my clay-king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
The after generations. Earth, methinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs;
Classing these present dogmas with the rest
Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits
And saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more:
We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
We would be alone.—Go.

Lucifer. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!
In Heaven they said so; and at Eden's gate,—
And here, reiterant, in the wilderness!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet!
And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?
Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.
Lucifer. Nothing more?
Eve. I think no more.
Lucifer. False Heart—thou thinkest more!
Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*
Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word
Which thrilled around us—God Himself being moved,
When that august work of a perfect shape,
His dignities of sovran angel-hood,
Swept out into the universe,—divine
With thundrous movements, earnest looks of gods,
And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings.
Whereof I was, in motion and in form,
A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
As God's voice is not here; nor even my crown—
I do not know. What is this thought or thing
Which I call beauty? is it thought or thing?
Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath; my perceptions reel
For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it too were holy.
Eve. Which it is.
Adam. The essence of all beauty I call love.
The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colourless,
Is nothing to the eye; that pine tree there,
Without its black and green, being all a blank;

So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
And what collateral love moves on with thee;
Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Lucifer. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and love!
I darken to the image. Beauty—Love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill
Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—
And, hark! the starry harmony remote
Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen so. By the hope
And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death!

Adam. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God!
How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself into uncertain articulation.*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative.
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet, and strange! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stands afar,—a shade.

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.

Mine orbed image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.
O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
I loved thee, with the fiery love of stars,
Who love by burning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah, not to love.
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,
Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Mine orbed heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old
Down from me, down from me.
O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer
Won to thee, won to thee?
Ai, ai, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,
Known to thee, known to thee.
Ai, ai!
Thou, breathing thy communicable grace
Of life into my light,
Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
Hast inly fed,
And flooded me with radiance overmuch
From thy pure height.
Ai, ai!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,
Erect, irradiated,
Didst sting my wheel of glory
On, on before thee,
Along the Godlight, by a quickening touch!
Ha, ha!
Around, around the firmamental ocean,
I swam expanding with delirious fire!
Around, around, around, in blind desire
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—
Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,—
To a blind whirl of rapture and delight,—
I wound in girant orbits, smooth and white
With that intense rapidity!
Around, around,
I wound and interwound,
While all the cyclic heavens about me spun!
Stars, planets, suns, and moons, dilated broad,
Then flashed together into a single sun,
And wound, and wound in one;
And as they wound I wound,—around, around,
In a great fire, I almost took for God!
Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee!
O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me!
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou:
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know—

I am strange—I am slow!
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me.
Ai, ai!
When, having wept all night, at break of day,
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.
Ai, ai!
And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss!
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?
Eve. Nay.
Adam. And yet the cedars and the junipers
Rock slowly through the mist, without a noise;
And shapes, which have no certainty of shape,
Drift duskly in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which contract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.
Eve. O Life
Which is not man's nor angel's! What is this?
Adam. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life
Contains all life beside.
Eve. I think the earth
Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense

Of those first laws affixed to form and space
Or ever she knew sin!
Adam. We will not fear:
We were brave sinning.
Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
With eyes upturned to Heaven, and seeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not GOD.
My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.
Adam. Night is near.
Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back,
And stand within the sword-glare till we die;
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.
Adam. Nay, beloved!
We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple: we must wait
Until He gives death, as He gave us life;
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift,
Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.
Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou discern what I behold?
Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes,
From their dilated orbits, bound before
To meet the spectral Dread!
Eve. I am afraid—
Ah, ah! The twilight bristles wild with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.
How near they reach . . . and far! How grey they move—
Treading upon the darkness without feet,—
And fluttering on the darkness without wings!
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground;
Some keep one path, like sheep; some rock like trees;
Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some flow on,
Copious as rivers.
Adam. Some spring up like fire—
And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou pause to say
Like what?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
From all the emerald splendour of his height,
And writhed,—and could not climb against the curse,
Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
I think it is God's will to make me afraid;
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
Of His beloved angels—gone from us,
Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
That didst permit the angels to go home,
And live no more with us who are not pure;
Save *us* too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
As *we* are in the purest! Pity us—
Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away
From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such, through the precedence
Of earth's adjusted uses,—evermore
To doubt, betwixt our senses and our souls,
Which are the most distraught, and full of pain,
And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, Sweet!
The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
With slow concentric movement, each on each,—
Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation; till the throng
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
Distinguishable phantasms, vague and grand,
Which sweep out and around us vastily,
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow! there are twelve.
Thou, who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,
Which rounds us with its visionary dread,—
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
In fantasque apposition and approach,

To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God,
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven!
But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,
In twelve colossal shades, instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,
Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,—
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,
To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
Thy terror of the shadows;—what is known
Subduing the unknown, and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
Presents a lion,—albeit, twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his mane!
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance; and there, a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself;
A bull stands horned here with gibbous glooms;
And a ram likewise; and a scorpion writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime, and stings the dark !
This way a goat leaps, with wild blank of beard ;
And here, fantastic fishes duskly float,
Using the calm for waters, while their fins
Throb out slow rhythms along the shallow air !
While images more human——

Eve. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou !*
Two phantasms of two men !

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives !—resuming, so, the ends
Of manhood's curse of labour.* Dost thou see
That phantasm of a woman ?—

Eve. I have seen—
But look off to those small humanities,†
Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—
Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,
Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence
Set in the misty lines of head and hand
They lean together ! I would gaze on them
Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,—
As the stars do in watching anything,—
Should light them forward from their outline vague,
To clear configuration—

Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic nature, arise from the ground.

But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,—
And thrust me into horror, back from hope !

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,—

* Adam recognises in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combatting,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces !—with no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.
O bleak sound !
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound !
How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail,
Around the cyclic zodiac ; and gains force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us ; whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate song
From out that spiral faintness of lament—
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless earth ;
God spake me softly out among the stars,
As softly as a blessing of much worth,—
And then, His smile did follow unawares,
That all things, fashioned, so, for use and duty,
Might shine anointed with His chrism of beauty—
Yet I wail !
I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall—
Individual aspect and complexity
Of giratory orb and interval,
Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being, beyond sight—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming ;
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,
And tasted, in each drop within the measure,
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—

Yet I wail !
What a full hum of life, around His lips,
Bore witness to the fulness of creation !
How all the grand words were full-laden ships ;
Each sailing onward, from enunciation,
To separate existence,—and each bearing
The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing !—
Yet I wail !

Eve. They wail, beloved ! they speak of glory and God,
And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
Into the lap of silence !

Adam. Hark, again !

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
My joy stood up within me bold and glad,
To answer God ; and, when His work was full,
To "very good," responded "very glad !"
Filtered through roses, did the light inclose me ;
And bunches of the grape swang blue across me—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers ! I rejoiced
In my young tumbling lions, rolled together !
My stag—the river at his fetlocks—poised,
Then dipped his antlers, through the golden weather,
In the same ripple which the alligator
Left in his joyous troubling of the water—
Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,—
What wordless triumph did your voices render !
O mountain-summits, where the angels stood,
And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour ;
How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye were worthy !
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes !
My horses—my ground eagles, for swift fleeing !
My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,—
My calm cold fishes of a silver being,—
How happy were ye, living and possessing,
O fair half-souls, capacious of full blessing.
Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge to-day,
Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers,
By God's sword at your backs ! I lent my clay
To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers:
And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me
The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—
And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten
My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured ?
Accursed transgressors ! down the steep ye hasten,—
Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it downward
Unto your ruin. Lo ! my lions, scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
And I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Do ye hear that I wail ?
I had no part in your transgression—none !
My roses on the bough did bud not pale—
My rivers did not loiter in the sun.
I was obedient. Wherefore, in my centre,
Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter !—
And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! I shriek in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded !
My nightingales sang sweet without a fault,
My gentle leopards innocently bounded ;
We were obedient—what is this convulses

Our blameless life with pangs and fever-pulses?
And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His angels' swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
Let us pass out, and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike
A sense of death to me, and undug graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling, like
The ragged foam along the ocean-waves:
The restless earthquakes rock against each other;—
The elements moan 'round me—"Mother, mother"—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
Why have ye done this thing? What did we do
That we should fall from bliss, as ye from duty?
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth—
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives—
Inferior creatures, but still innocent—
Be salutation from a guilty mouth,
Yet worthy of some audience and respect
From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, who is over us,
To give rebuke or death; and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye, who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such peace
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge,

Such as the Heavens have made you. Verily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.
Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did, to reach disdain,
Who rather should be humbler evermore,
Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall I speak—
I, who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud?
I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
My king, if not the world's?
Adam. Speak as thou wilt.
Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—
. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!
I pray you humbly in the name of God;
Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
From the wronged to the wronger; this and no more;
I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptation of pure joy,
Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars; or watch the vales,
Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy;
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells
Work out their bubbling lengths beneath the ground,—
And all the birds sing, till, for joy of song,
They lift their trembling wings, as if to heave
The too-much weight of music from their heart,
And float it up the æther! I am 'ware
That these things I can no more apprehend,
With a pure organ, into a full delight;
The sense of beauty and of melody

Being no more aided in me by the sense
Of personal adjustment to those heights
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,—
But rather coupled darkly, and made ashamed,
By my percipiency of sin and fall,
And melancholy of humiliant thoughts.
But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
Your accusation must confront my soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze
Must evermore subdue me; be content—
Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving! let my tears fall thick
As watering dews of Eden, unreproached;
And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,
Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
And peradventure better, while more sad.
For look to it, sweet Spirits—look well to it—
It will not be amiss in you who kept
The law of your own righteousness, and keep
The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—
To pity me twice fallen,—from that, and this,—
From joy of place, and also right of wail,—
"I wail" being not for me—only "I sin."
Look to it, O sweet Spirits!—
For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the western clouds flashed out in throngs
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
The lady of the world, princess of life,
Mistress of feast and favour? Could I touch
A rose with my white hand, but it became
Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely
Along our swarded garden, but the grass
Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as alive,

With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
Because I stood there? Could I turn to look
With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
And is not this much woe, to cry "alas!"
Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,
To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?
To have stretched mine hand, and plucked it from the tree,
And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this
Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Hearken, Spirits!
Our God, who is the enemy of none,
But only of their sin,—hath set your hope
And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
Show reverence, then,—and never bruise her more
With unpermitted and extreme reproach;
Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us,
Of sovranty by reason and freewill;
Sinning against the province of the Soul
To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate;
And pass out from her presence with no words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart,—
O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,—
And let me speak; for, not being innocent,
It little doth become me to be proud;
And I am prescient by the very hope
And promise set upon me, that henceforth,
Only my gentleness shall make me great,
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
Be witness that I stand in your reproof
But one sun's length off from my happiness—

Happy, as I have said, to look around—
Clear to look up!—And now! I need not speak—
Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so—
Because ye see me what I have made myself
From God's best making! Alas,—peace forgone,—
Love wronged,—and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that best
Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest,
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—
What word metes absolute loss? let absolute loss
Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless world!
I, reigning the earth's empress, yesterday,
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers!
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
Composed and glad, as singing-birds the sun,
Might shriek now from our dismal desert, "God,"
And hear Him make reply, "What is thy need,
Thou whom I cursed to-day?"

Adam. Eve!

Eve. *I*, at last,
Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him! And, so, pity us,
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow
With boughs on both sides. In the shade of which,
When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
For the poor sake of our humility,
Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
And drop your twilight dews against our brows;
And stroking with mild airs, our harmless hands
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER *rises in the circle.*

Lucifer. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
My docile Eve! I teach you to despond,
Who taught you disobedience. Look around;—
Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk, unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again, and talked!
What are your words to them? your griefs to them?
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause
For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. It is true.

Lucifer. Ay, it is true. The clay-king testifies
To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. And certes, *that* is true,
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou universe,
That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God,
And could not see Him;—wretched Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!

Earth Spirits. I wail—wail!

Lucifer (*after a pause*). Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse
Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak

Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
And his mane listening. When the ended curse
Left silence in the world,—right suddenly
He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes,—and roared so fierce,
(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)—
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
To distant silence,—that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
In savage and in sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,
He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height,
Hid by the dark-orbed pines.

Adam. It might have been.
I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. That lion is the type of what I am!
And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
And roared, O Adam—comprehending doom;
So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here, between the Heavens and earth,
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
Which damn me to this depth!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail—O God!

Lucifer. I scorn you that ye wail,
Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
And deal in pathos of antithesis
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are;—
I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry,
I, too, would drive up, like a column erect,

Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,
A monument of anguish, to transpierce
And overtop your vapoury complaints
Expressed from feeble woes!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,
The outcast, and the mildew of things good,
The leper of angels, the excepted dust
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
To whom the highest and the lowest alike
Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—
Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair;
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
His blessing for chief angels, on my head,
Until it grew there, a crown crystallised!
Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as "Gabriel"—
Lucifer—soft as "Michael!" while serene
I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
Answered "my Father," innocent of shame
And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
White angels in your niches,—I repent,—
And would tread down my own offences, back
To service at the footstool? *That's* read wrong:
I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep
Against the sides of this prodigious pit,
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail,
On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a woe sustained
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs,
In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed

To your own conscience, by the dread extremes
Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
It is a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
Strewn woolly soft with promise ; if ye have sinned,
Your prayers tread high as angels ! if ye have grieved,
Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
And power to die disproveth right to grieve.
Go to ! ye call this ruin. I half-scorn
The ill I did you ! Were ye wronged by me,
Hated and tempted, and undone of me,—
Still, what's your hurt to mine, of doing hurt,
Of hating, tempting, and so ruining ?
This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
The hand that wields it.
Go—I curse you all.
Hate one another—feebly—as ye can ;
I would not certes cut you short in hate—
Far be it from me ! hate on as ye can !
I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves,
And, lifting up their brownness, show beneath
The branches very bare.—Beseech you, give
To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love
For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
An answer rather fitting to the sin
Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I trow,
For justice' sake, gave their's.
I curse you both,
Adam and Eve ! Say grace as after meat,
After my curses. May your tears fall hot
On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,
Ye and your generations, in all plagues,
Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
And hideous forms of life and fears of death ;
The thought of death being alway eminent
Immovable and dreadful in your life,
And deafly and dumbly insignificant

Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,—
Whichever of you lieth dead the first,—
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
And HE find no redemption—nor the wing
Of seraph move your way—and yet rejoice!
Rejoice,—because ye have not set in you
This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate
Which glares without, because it burns within—
Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
To God and His reflex beatitudes,
Moan ever in the central universe,
With the great woe of striving against Love—
And gasp for space amid the Infinite—
And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
To kingship of resistant agony
Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate love,
And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the Past, and damning the To come—
Go and rejoice! I curse you! [LUCIFER *vanishes.*

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
Which can lean to you aright!
When your bodies take the guerdon
Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you.
Then ye shall not move an eyelid
Though the stars look down your eyes;
And the earth, which ye defiled,
She shall show you to the skies,—
"Lo! these kings of ours—who sought to comprehend you."

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain;

Unresistedly and coldly,
I will smite you with my rain!
From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part,
He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
O'er the noble human heart!
Give him counsel against losing of that Eden

Adam. Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn
Toward your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion-strife;
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though undone,
Not unmade for love and life.
Lo! ye utter words in vain!
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire;
By the pinings which disclose
That my native soul is higher
Than what it chose,—
We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your disdain.

Eve. Nay, beloved! if these be low,
We confront them with no height;
We stooped down to their level
In working them that evil;
And their scorn that meets our blow,
Scathes aright.
Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly,
When ye lie beneath the sward!
There, my lily shall grow stately,
Though ye answer not a word—
And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence!

While your throne, ascending calmly,
We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean, roll
With the thoughts that throbbed within you—round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will:
With the grandeur of your spirit,
Shall our broad savannahs fill—
In our winds, your exultations shall be springing.
Even your parlance which inveigles,
By our rudeness, shall be won:
Hearts poetic in our eagles,
Shall beat up against the sun,
And pour downward, in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth,
With his thunderous jaw, shall wield!
Your high fancies shall our Mammoth
Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of St. Michael, at God's throne, who waits to speed him
Till the Heavens' smooth-grooved thunder
Spinning back, shall leave them clear;
And the angels, smiling wonder,
With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye exceed him!"

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet, from the dreary ground.
Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by *these*.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in *these*.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair,
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy,
Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise

This morning as I went forth ; and my heart
Hath beat against its petals all the day.
I thought it would be always red and full,
As when I plucked it—*Is* it?—ye may see!
I cast it down to you that ye may see,
All of you !—count the petals lost of it—
And note the colours fainted ! ye may see :
And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth !
I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
Which will not let me, down the slope of death,
Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth-zodiac ; and filling the circle with its presence, and then wailing off into the east, carries the flower away with it.* EVE *falls upon her face.* ADAM *stands erect.*

Adam. So, verily,
The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"
And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.
I exiled and I will not orphan Love."
But now it is no choice of mine to die—
My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.
Death's consummation crowns completed life,
Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee
For others ; if for others, then for thee,—
For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-flower, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.*

Let thy soul shake its leaves,
To feel the mystic wind—Hark !

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive,
Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into,
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange, that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
In a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve,
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which, with pulses manifold,
Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,—
Though the vessel's prow will quiver
At the lifting of the anchor:
Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air,
That its beauty may be plain:
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain?

Infant voices passing.
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.
Philosophic voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we perceive,
Is a strong thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,—
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain?
Infant voices passing.
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.
Revel voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprieve,
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain!
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine;—
For is all laughed in vain?
Infant voices passing.
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,—
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward main.
I hear life—life!

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched

Scarlet to paleness ; and thine eyes drink fast
Of glory from full cups ; and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words, or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life ?
Hear the steep generations, how they fall
Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near ;
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these ?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

[EVE *sinks down again.*

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we believe,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily,
To view God without a stain :
Till, recoiling where the shade is
We retread our steps again,
And descend the gloomy Hades,
To taste man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart,
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.
"Wilt thou be one with me ?"
"I will be one with thee !"
"Ha, ha !—we love and live !"
Alas ! ye love and die !
Shriek—who shall reply !
For is it not loved in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be all in vain.

Old voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive,
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which, consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain.
Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be *all* in vain. [*Voices die away.*

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Humanity
Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. O spirits! by the gentleness ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,—
In gliding waters under lily-leaves,—
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush
A bird makes in her nest, with feet and wings,—
Fulfil your natures! Do not any more
Taunt us or mock us—let us die alone.

Earth Spirits.

Agreed; allowed!
We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightenings! Thus, and thus!
Hearken, O hearken to us!

First Spirit.

As the east wind blows bleakly in the norland,—
As the snow-wind beats blindly from the moorland,—
As the simoom drives wild across the desert,—
As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,—

As the torrent tears an ocean-world to atoms,—
As the whirlpool grinds fathoms below fathoms,—
Thus,—and thus !

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,—
As the tiger, in the jungle, crouching stilly,—
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of anger,—
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangour,—
As the vultures that scream against the thunder,—
As the owlets that sit and moan asunder,—
Thus,—and thus !

Eve. Adam ! God !

Adam. Ye cruel, cruel, unrelenting Spirits !
By the power in me of the sovran soul,
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angels' march,
I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you !

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha ! thou art king !
With a sin for a crown,
And a soul undone :
Thou, who antagonised,
Tortured and agonised,
Art held in the ring
Of the zodiac !
Now, king, beware !
We are many and strong,
Whom thou standest among,—
And we press on the air,
And we stifle thee back,
And we multiply where
Thou wouldst trample us down
From rights of our own,
To an utter wrong—
And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn !
We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee! I make appeal
Unto Thy kingship.
Eve. There is pity in THEE,
O sinned against, great God!—My seed, my seed,
There is hope set on THEE—I cry to Thee,
Thou mystic seed that shalt be!—leave us not
In agony beyond what we can bear,
And in debasement below thunder-mark
For Thine arch-image,—taunted and perplext
By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
Whom Thou, Lord, rulest alway. O my Seed,
Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,
Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head.

[*A vision of* CHRIST *appears in the midst of the zodiac, which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth Spirits grow greyer and fainter.*

CHRIST. LO, I AM HERE!
Adam. This is God!—Curse us not, God, any more.
Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,
Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet!
Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—
To the low height of some good angel's feet,—
For such to tread on, when he walketh straight,
And Thy lips praise him.
CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True, they have sinned;
And true, their sin is reckoned into loss
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,
Which of you praises? since God made your acts
Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands
With instincts and imperious sanctities,
From self-defacement? Which of you disdains
These sinners, who, in falling, proved their height
Above you, by their liberty to fall?

And which of you complains of loss by them,
For whose delight and use ye have your life
And honour in creation? Ponder it!
This regent and sublime Humanity,
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,—
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,—
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this rule
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast
Devouring; tree by tree, with strangling roots
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, "Why, God, hast Thou made us thus?"
And, pining to a sallow idiocy,
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life;
Then stagnate into rottenness, and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore, over you,
Accept this sceptre; therefore be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And service in you, to this sceptred hand.
Be ye to man as angels be to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest. So, at last,
He shall look round on you, with lids too straight
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well;
And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
And praise you when he sings his open songs,
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you,
Of purifying sweetness; and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies,
Which glorify you into soul from sense!
Go, serve him for such price. That not in vain;

Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath for act
To be hereafter. In the name of which
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
I bless you through the hope and through the peace,
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit Thou bless me not
In set words, I am blessed in hearkening Thee—
Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence. Rise, aspire
Unto the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses, and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth! Raise the majesties
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
And front with level eyelids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world. Behold! my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express,—
God breathing through my breath,—the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name;
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, woman, rise
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,—
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness,

The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied;
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood—
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin;
Some pang paid down for each new human life;
Some weariness in guarding such a life—
Some coldness from the guarded; some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served; from those beloved
Too loyally, some treason: feebleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty without;
And pressures of an alien tyranny,
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
After its own life-working. A child's kiss,
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad:
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich;
An old man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close;
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close,—
I bless thee in the name of Paradise,
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost;—by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out;
And by the blessed nightingale, which threw
Its melancholy music after us;—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells

Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
And fourfold river-courses :—by all these,
I bless thee to the contraries of these ;
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to this END
Of Death and the hereafter !

Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this high part,
Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest ;
And in the place of Eden's lost delight,
Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;
While on my longest patience there shall wait
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the shade.
Shall it be so ? Shall *I* smile, saying so ?
O seed ! O King ! O God, who *shalt* be seed,—
What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains swelled
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
Betwixt Thy love and power !
And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first time
Since God said "Adam," walking through the trees,
I dare to pluck you, as I plucked erewhile
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope,
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,—
And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As Thou, Christ, to illume it, holdest Heaven
Broadly above our heads.

[*The* CHRIST *is gradually transfigured during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.
Adam. We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ.
Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—
Diviner, with the possible of Death!
We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.
Adam. How do Thy clear, still eyes transpierce our souls
As gazing *through* them towards the Father-throne,
In a pathetical, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
Straight on each other.
Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon.
CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,
And grand dim lips, that murmur evermore
God, God, God! while the rush of life and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,—
The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Toiling down space,—the new worlds' genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth
Of the ancient atoms, and first forms of earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas
And firmamental waters,—and the noise
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterant, solemn sound of—GOD!
Which WORD, innumerous angels straightway lift
High on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop
The burden softly; shutting the last notes
Hushed up in silver wings! I' the noon of time,
Nathless, that mystic-lipped Eternity
Shall wax as silent-dumb as Death himself,
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
"God! why hast Thou forsaken me, my God?"
And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heavenlies ; yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are Thy voice and face !
Eve. My nature overcomes me from Thine eyes.
CHRIST. Then, in the noon of time, shall one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon God,
Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure love,
For all the world in all its elements ;
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea ;
For all men in the body and in the soul,
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.
Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship Thee :
I thank Thee for that woman !
CHRIST. For, at last,
I, wrapping round me your humanity,
Which, being sustained, shall neither break nor burn
Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs
I will confront your sins : and since your sins
Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,
The tears of my clean soul shall follow them,
And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In my brow
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned anew
Your discrowned human nature. Look on me !
As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguished dread,
So shall I lift up in my pierced hands,
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
The whole creation. Henceforth in my name
Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope !
Your graves shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts ;
And, one step past them, a new Eden-gate
Shall open on a hinge of harmony,

And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
First sinners and first mourners. Live and love,—
Doing both nobly, because lowlily;
Live and work, strongly,—because patiently!
And, for the deed of death, trust it to God,
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence, with constant prayers
Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
The smile of your heroic cheer may float
Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain!

[*The vision of* CHRIST *vanishes.* ADAM *and* EVE *stand in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep back into the zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We, our homage-oath once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing;

And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning;
Here, we promise milder duty;
And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organise in beauty,

A sabbath day in sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us;
If this mortal and unholy,
We still fail to cast out from us,—

And we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences;

If ye tremble, when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm trees;
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our marjoram and balm trees;
And if your souls, all mournfully, sit down among your senses,—
Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,—
We are gentle in our languor;
And more good ye shall have near us,
Than any pain or anger;
And our God's refracted blessing, in our blessing, shall be given;
By the desert's endless vigil,
We will solemnise your passions;
By the wheel of the black eagle
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature;
And our hands shall stroke the curse's
Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death, and straight and slumberful:
Then, a couch we will provide you,
Where no summer heats shall dazzle;
Strewing on you and beside you
The thyme and the sweet basil—
And the cypress shall grow overhead, to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chrism around us running,
Whereby, newly-consecrated,
We shall leap up in God's sunning,
To join the spheric company, where the pure worlds assemble;

While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glorious,
Ye shall brighten past the angels—
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious;
And the rays around His feet, beneath your sobbing lips,
shall tremble.

[*The phantastic vision has all passed; the earth-zodiac has broken like a belt, and dissolved from the desert. The Earth Spirits vanish; and the stars shine out above, bright and mild.*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM *and* EVE *advance into the desert, hand in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise,
Through your mortal passion!
Love, ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation!
As a fish or bird
Swims or flies, if moving,
We, unseen, are heard
To live on by loving.
Far above the glances
Of your eager eyes,
Listen! we are loving!
Listen, through man's ignorances—
Listen, through God's mysteries—
Listen down the heart of things,
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Rustle with our loving!
Through the opal door,
Listen evermore
How we live by loving.

First semichorus.

When your bodies, therefore,
Lie in grave or goal,
Softly will we care for
Each enfranchised soul!

Softly and unlothly,
Through the door of opal,
We will draw you soothly
Toward the Heavenly people.
Floated on a minor fine
Into the full chant divine,
We will draw you smoothly,—
While the human in the minor
Makes the harmony diviner:
Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

Then a sough of glory
Shall your entrance greet;
Ruffling, round the doorway,
The smooth radiance it shall meet.
From the Heavenly throned centre
Heavenly voices shall repeat—
"Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter;
For the chrism on you is sweet."
And every angel in the place
Lowlily shall bow his face,
Folded fair on softened sounds,
Because upon your hands and feet
He thinks he sees his Master's wounds:
Listen to our loving.

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
Consummated undoing,
Our angels of white mercies
Shall hover round the ruin!
Their wings shall stream upon the flame,
As if incorporate of the same,
In elemental fusion;
And calm their faces shall burn out,
With a pale and mastering thought,
And a stedfast looking of desire,
From out between the clefts of fire,—
While they cry, in the Holy's name,

To the final Restitution !
Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
To the thick graves accompted ;
Awaking the dead bodies,
The angel of the trumpet
Shall split the charnel earth
To the roots of the grave,
Which never before were slackened ;
And quicken the charnel birth,
With his blast so clear and brave ;
Till the Dead all stand erect,—
And every face of the burial-place
Shall the awful, single look, reflect,
Wherewith he them awakened.
Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death !
He will leap up wild at the clamour
Above and beneath ;
And where is his Tamer
On that last day,
When he crieth, Ha, ha !
To the trumpet's evangel,
And paweth the earth's Aceldama ?
When he tosseth his head,
The drear-white steed,
And champeth athwart the last moon-ray,—
Oh, where is the angel
Can lead him away,
That the living may rule for the Dead ?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found !
One more bright than seraphs crowned,
And more strong than cherub bold ;
Elder, too, than angel old,
By his grey eternities,—

He shall master and surprise
The steed of Death,
For He is strong, and He is fain;
He shall quell him with a breath,
And shall lead him where He will,
With a whisper in the ear,
Which it alone can hear—
Full of fear—
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades, where the souls assemble,
He will guide the Death-steed, calm between their ranks;
While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering flanks.
Through the flats of Hades, where the dreary shade is,—
Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles—circle above circle,
We, who count the ages, shall count the tolling tread—
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder, blanker sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed, with muffled hoofs, shall travel,
Ashen grey the planets shall be motionless as stones;
Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,—
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons;
And suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in wild, low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,
Shall the horse's nostrils steam the blurting breath;
Up between the angels pale with silent feeling,
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse of death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne:
"Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,
With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who am Thy Son."

Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,
On the horse-eyes feeding, shall burn out their fire:
Blind the beast shall stagger, where It overcame him,—
Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in desire—
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

A Voice. Gabriel, thou Gabriel!

Another Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound in the angels' song;
And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called thrice to my morning star
And had no answer? All the stars are out,
And round the earth, upon their silver lives,
Wheel out the music of the inner life,
And answer in their places. Only in vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of *my* star, shut in light behind the sun!
No more reply than from a breaking string,
Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star?
Where *is* my star—my star? Have ye cast down
Her glory like my glory? Has she waxed
Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt to hate
Like any angel?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee:
All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

Chorus. Live, work on, O Earthy!
By the Actual's tension,
Speed the arrow worthy
Of a pure ascension.
From the low earth round you,
Reach the heights above you;
From the stripes that wound you,
Seek the loves that love you!
God's divinest burneth plain
Through the crystal diaphane
Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel!

Second Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me?
First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims?
That HE claims THAT too?
Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.
First Voice. That HE will be an exile from His Heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. That HE will be an exile by His will,
As I by mine election?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. That *I* shall stand sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. Gabriel!
Second Voice. I hearken.
First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient star will give
Her name of "Bright and Morning-Star" to HIM,—
And take the fairness of His virtue back,
To cover loss and sadness?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. UNTRUE, UNTRUE! O Morning-Star! O MINE!
Who sittest secret in a veil of light,
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters! I am Lucifer—
[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*
All things grow sadder to me, one by one.
Chorus. Exiled Human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger!
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's,
God is the Discharger;
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden,
In a light exceeding:
What their rays have measured,
Let your hearts fulfil!
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden;
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still.

Chorus. Future joy and far light
Working such relations,—
Hear us singing gently—
Exiled is not lost!
God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost.
Patiently enduring,
Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you—
Hope the uttermost—
Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded,
Hear us sing above you—
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

[*The stars shine on brightly, while* ADAM *and* EVE *pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.*

SONNETS.

Sonnets.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

With stammering lips and insufficient sound,
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling, interwound;
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground!
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

The seraph sings before the manifest
God-one, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest:
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven;
Before the naughty world soon self-forgiven
For wronging him; and in the darkness prest

From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
Sing, seraph with the glory! Heaven is high—
Sing, poet with the sorrow! Earth is low!
The universe's inward voices cry
"Amen" to either song of joy and woe—
Sing seraph,—poet,—sing on equally.

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH, BY B. R. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. *He*, with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,—
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens! A noble vision free,
Our Haydon's hand hath flung out from the mist!
No portrait this, with Academic air—
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
Saith no grace after meat. My wine hath run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast

Scattered and trampled ! Yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see ;
Singing within myself as bird or bee,
When such do field-work on a morn of May :
But now I look upon my flowers,—decay
Hath met them in my hands, more fatally,
Because more warmly clasped ; and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends ? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields, and gather more ?
Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I !
My heart is very tired—my strength is low—
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befell,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing : at her marriage-bell,
The bride weeps : and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet hath forgot

That moisture on his cheeks. Commend the grace,
Mourners, who weep! Albeit, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert place,
And touch but tombs,—look up! Those tears will run
Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless—
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air,
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls, as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blenching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death;
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath!
Touch it! the marble eyelids are not wet—
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh—
Not reason's subtle count! Not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew—

Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress trees
To the clear moon ; nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ !—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet—
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth
To lose the sense of losing ! As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth ;
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand ;
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,
With nightingales in visionary wolds.

We murmur,—"Where is any certain tune
Or measured music, in such notes as these?"—
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded! their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences;
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil—
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their hearts and hands,
From thy hands, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,—
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche

In Heaven to hold our idols ! and albeit
He brake them to our faces, and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,—
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,—
The dust shook from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses, in the Church's brow and breast ;
And, by them, we find rest in our unrest,
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
God's fellowship, as if on Heavenly seat.
One is, AND JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet :—
And one is, where the Christ denied and scorned
LOOKED UPON PETER ! Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little, and mourned,—
That look of sovran love and sovran pain,
Which HE who could not sin, yet suffered, turned
On him who could reject, but not sustain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word—
No gesture of reproach ! The Heavens serene,
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way ! The forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was ; none guess : for those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,

Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call!
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
"I never knew this man"—did quail and fall,
As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and turned free,
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
"Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon,
For all God's charge, to His high angels, may
Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning-sun,—
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?—
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy deathly need is bitterest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,—
Because I KNOW *this man, let him be clear.*"

*A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.**

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Then pray alone—"O Christ, come tenderly!
By Thy forsaken Sonship,—and the red

* Written at the request of my friend Miss Cockell, to whom it is inscribed.

Drear wine-press,—and the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine;
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to divine."

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarolle;
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident controul,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus, swift and stedfast; thus, intent and strong;
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude, and thirst of sweetnesses;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,

That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower, grew nettle-rough—
The thoughts called bees, stung me to festering.
Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting.

AN APPREHENSION.

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear
Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
In the free voice . . . . O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me! Do ye hear
What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face-to-face with God?

DISCONTENT.

Light human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause; complaining on—
Restless with rest—until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach; or let the wilful sun

Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm! Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore;
And here, submissive, o'er the stormy main,
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

"O DREARY life!" we cry, "O dreary life!"
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle. Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land: savannah-swards
Unweary sweep: hills watch, unworn; and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees,
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory. O thou God of old!
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to *these*;—
But so much patience, as a blade of grass
Grows by contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might be faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls. But since the scope

Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road—
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints?—At least it may be said,
"Because the way is *short*, I thank Thee, God!"

EXAGGERATION.

We overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination, given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshone
By God's clear glory,—down our earth to rake
The dismal snows instead; flake following flake,
To cover all the corn. We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers. Near the alderbrake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers! let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of Grief!—holy herein,
That, by the grief of One, came all our good.

ADEQUACY.

Now by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Beloved England,—doth the earth appear
Quite noble enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills!
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course; nor that the clear

Strong stars, without significance, insphere
Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills,
Heap up against this good ; and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,—
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light ! That thou to woman's claim,
And man's, might join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame ;
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

True genius, but true woman ! dost deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity ?

Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn:—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name. And while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the spirit-shore;
To which alone unsexing, purely aspire.

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years,
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at! Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine;
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,

To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony!
But, like a dreary wind against a tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak—
The effluence of each is false to all;
And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall!
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration, without let or thrall.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

The Romaunt of the Page.

"The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy,
That ever master had."

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine,
Did slow and thoughtful ride,—
As each were a palmer, and told for beads,
The dews of the eventide.

"O young page," said the knight,
"A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow"—

"O brave knight," said the page,
"Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game:
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

"Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through:
And in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

"The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought, from these, o' the beechen-trees
Which, in our England, wave;
And of the little finches fine,
Which sang there, while in Palestine
The warrior-hilt we drave.

"Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray!
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for *me*
Wherein she passed away;
And I know the Heavens are leaning down
To hear what I shall say."

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free!
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly:—

"Sir page, I pray your grace!
Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
With the crook of the battle-bow;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I trow, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

"And this, I meant to say,—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My page from Palestine:
Or, speak she fair, or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

"And this, I meant to fear,—
Her bower may suit thee ill!

For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
Thy *talk* was somewhat still;
And fitter thine hand for my knightly spear,
Than thy tongue for my lady's will."

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head:
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead;
And no lady in her bower pardiè,
Could blush more sudden red—
"Sir knight,—thy lady's bower to me,
Is suited well," he said.

Beati, beati, mortui!
From the convent on the sea,—
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the lady Abbess dead before it,—
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
Her voice did charge and bless—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the Dead than upon death!
Beati, beati, mortui!
Now the vision in the sound
Wheeleth on the wind around—
Now it sweeps aback, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,—
Or ere the page's blush is past!
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

"A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I served thee!
Though thou art a knight, and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved, or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye."

Gloomily looked the knight;—
"As a son thou hast served me:
And would to none, I had granted boon,
Except to only thee!
For haply then I should love aright,—
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.

"Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue,
To grudge that granted boon!
That heavy price, from heart and life,
I paid in silence down:
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame! I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend;
And while I rode the lists at court,
And little guessed the end,—
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.

"Oh, calm, below the marble grey,
My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek, above the marble grey,
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied—the wretch was brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,

He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

"But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it!
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit!
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon that traitor's corse,
Was yielded the true spirit!

"I would mine hand had fought that fight,
And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that wound
And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murthered friend, and marriage-ring,
Forced on my life together.

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier:
Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
'And bring the avengèd's son anear!
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee;
For white of ble, with waiting for me,
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

"I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife—
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely, when thou wert not here,
His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the court ;
My bark rocks on the brine ;
And the warrior's vow, I am under now,
To free the pilgrim's shrine :
But fetch the ring, and fetch the priest,
And call that daughter of thine ;
And rule she wide, from my castle on Nyde,
While I am in Palestine.'

"In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see ;
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we.
Her mother smiled upon her bed,
As at its side we knelt to wed ;
And the bride rose from her knee,—
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

"My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
That the tears run down thy face ?"—
"Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr
Was in thy lady's case !
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place."

And wept the page, and laughed the knight.—
A careless laugh, laughed he :
"Well done it were for thy sistèr,
But not for my ladyè !
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be."

The page stopped weeping, and smiled cold—
"Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest

The mincing ladies wear:
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well—I dare to hold—
By truth, or by despair."

He smiled no more—he wept no more,—
But passionate he spake,—
"Oh, womanly, she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly, she paled in fight,
For one belovèd's sake!—
And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood,
Most woman-pure, did make!"

"Well done it were for thy sistèr—
Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale—
Not dread for me, but love for me,
Shall make my lady pale!
No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman's veil."

"But what if she mistook thy mind,
And followed thee to strife;
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
As Paynims ask for life?"
"I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

"Look up—there is a small bright cloud
Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's glory lies."
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes:

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—
Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still!
And the page seeth all, and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
"Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide!"
"Yea, fast, my page; I will do so;
And keep thou at my side."

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede!
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque, that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

"Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side."
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
No smile the word had won!
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
I ween he had never gone!
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon!

For dread was the woe in the face so young;
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-sprung,
And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands, as if to hold
His soul's great agony—
"Have I renounced my womanhood,
For wifehood unto *thee?*
And is this the last, last look of thine,
That ever I shall see?

"Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
A lady to thy mind;
More woman-proud, and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind!
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind."

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful Heavens to seek!
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her Loved did speak.
How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,—
And the tears, down either cheek.

. . . . . .

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
False page, but truthful woman!
She stands amid them all unmoved:
The heart, once broken by the loved,
Is strong to meet the foeman.

"Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine-cups, resting?"—
"I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting:
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay to question."

"Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him?"—
"Now search the lea, and search the wood,
And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him."

"Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying."—
"I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
'Twere better at replying."
They cursed her deep, they smote her low.
They cleft her golden ringlets through:
The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath,
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly!
As over wood and over lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,

And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns, with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud!
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one?*

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

The Lay of the Brown Rosary.

"Go thy ways. I did not think to have shed one tear for thee, but thou hast made me water my plants spite of my heart."

WITCH OF EDMONTON.

FIRST PART.

"ONORA, Onora"—her mother is calling—
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom—and calls home the maiden—
"Night cometh, Onora."

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end, where the green arbour is—
"Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
Night cometh—Onora!"

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles, when the anthem is done,
And the choristers, sitting with faces aslant,
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
"Onora, Onora!"

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
"Onora, art coming?"—What is it she seeth?
Nought, nought, but the grey border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
"My daughter!"—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:
"Now where is Onora?"—He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
"At the tryst with her lover."

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
"As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one,
And will ne'er wed another?"

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight, yet sad,
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
He stamped with his foot, said—"The saints know I lied,
Because truth that is wicked, is fittest to hide!
Must I utter it, mother?"

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
"Oh; she sits with the nun of the brown rosarie,
At nights in the ruin!

"The old convent ruin, the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;
Where no singing-birds build; and the trees gaunt and grey,
As in stormy sea-coasts, appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?

"A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

"I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground!
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same, with his fangs at her throat,
In the pass of the Brocken.

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
With the brown rosarie never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to Heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*,
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosarie,
And a face turned from Heaven?

"St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams; and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids, the warmth of her smile—
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—'Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora!
The Tempted is sinning.'"

Onora, Onora! they heard her not coming—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning!

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes:
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;
While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,
And floats through the chamber.

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she,
"I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me!
And I know by the hills, that the battle is done—
That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee!"

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;
But the boy started up, pale with tears, passion-wrought,—
"O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!
If he cometh, who told thee?"

"I know by the hills," she resumed calm and clear,
"By the beauty upon them that HE is anear!
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping."

Half-ashamed and half-softened, the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:
She bowed down to kiss him—Dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARIE—
That he shrank away weeping?

PART SECOND.

A bed—ONORA *sleeping.* Angels, *but not near.*

First Angel.
Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?
Second Angel.
As bodies be.
First Angel.
And she so mild?
Second Angel.
As spirits, when
They meeken, not to God but men.
First Angel.
And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing,

That, at her waking, she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep!
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—
God's love—for man's!

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this! not only her!
Let me approach, to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before:
While, in a mother undefiled,
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: Is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!
THE PLACE IS FILLED. [Angels *vanish.*

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit.

It is a *thought.*

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good—
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it would.
I say in it no holy hymn,—I do no holy work;
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least!
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast—
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so!
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard stone,—
Oh, deep and straight; oh, very straight! they move at nights alone:
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,—
"Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!"

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my word shall answer thine.
I hear a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying;
I see the poppies in the corn, I used to sport away in!—
What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the blossoms blowing?
Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still! Stand up where thou dost stand,
Among the fields of Dreamland, with thy father, hand in hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—declare its cause and kind,
Which, not to break in sleep or wake, thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of wicked kind, a vow for mournful cause:
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laughed applause!
The spirits trailed, along the pines, low laughter like a breeze,
While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back afraid!
Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die;—
I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company!
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine, upon my lips that smiled!
The linden-tree that covers thee, might, so, have shadowed twain—
For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain.
Love feareth death! I was no child—I was betrothed that day;
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips, I could not give away!
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own Betrothed go by—alas! no more mine own,—
Go leading by, in wedding pomp, some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were cold in grave?
How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might take—

That *her's*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes—ah, me! while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!) would darken down
to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wert called to death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide
thee;
And ever he flapped his heavy wing, all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping
beak!
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay
forlorn,
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud, in ghastly
fragments torn!
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the
flapping wing,
We heard, beside the Heavenly Gate, the angels murmuring:—
We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days to
seven,
And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of Heaven:
And yet He grants the evil ones, that purpose to defer,
For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of *her*"—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—
"I count upon my rosarie brown, the hours thou hast to stay!
Yet God permits us evil ones to put by that decree,
Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of *thee*—
And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall guess what angels be—
Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . . Alas!—my father's hand's
acold—
The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told!

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnal lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds—
This rosarie brown which is thine own,—lost soul of buried nun,—
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone;
I vowed upon thy rosarie brown,—and, till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosarie (Dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love! I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel?—is greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels heard but *his.*

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Ay me! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ay me! how dread can look the Dead!—Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through the night!
There is nought! The great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor;
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARIE.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle;
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair companie,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,—
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely, and think for the nonce,
"And so endeth a wooing!"

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say:
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,—
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,—
Till in nearing the chapel, and glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the door,—
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child!
He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

"O fair-featured maids, ye are many!" he cried,—
"But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom,
For the courage and woe, can ye match with the groom,
As ye see them before ye?"

Out spake the bride's mother—"The vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!"
Out spake the bride's lover—"The vileness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine,
And the charge be unprovèd.

"Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud—
Let thy father and her's hear it deep in his shroud!"—
"O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosarie*,
O my father belovèd!"

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel-wall—
"So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother," quoth he,
"She may wear, an she listeth, a brown rosarie,
Like a pure-hearted lady!"

Then swept through the chapel, the long bridal train!
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went,
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,
And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view,
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue,
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white,
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

"In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for Heaven!

But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead—
O shrive her and wed not!"

In tears, the bride's mother,—"Sir priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair companie!"
In wrath, the bride's lover,—"The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear—
Be the charge proved or said not!"

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place—
"Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosarie!*
Is it used for the praying?"

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled with smiles shut within:
Quoth the priest—"Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed she,
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosarie
To a worldly arraying!"

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun—
They have knelt down together to rise up as one—
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,—
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest, without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
He felt a power on him, too strong for his will;
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

"I have sinned," quoth he, "I have sinned, I wot"—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought;
They dropped fast on the book; but he read on the same,—
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done,
They who knelt down together, arise up as one:
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosarie,
No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide—
Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—
His lip stung her with cold: she glanced upwardly mute:
"Mine own wife," he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,—
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine, and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!
Let his bride gaze upon him!

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there,
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her,
But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—
She has lived, and forgone him!

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
"Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee! Come, keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching!"

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his mouth;
And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
"Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!—
God, hear my beseeching?"

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay;
She was 'ware of a presence that wither'd the day—
Wild she sprang to her feet,—"I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosarie,—
I am ready for dying!"

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground,
Where it fell mute as snow; and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn,
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

Onora looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:
"I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk!
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—
Of the stedfast skies above, the running brooks below;—
All things are the same but I;—only I am dreary;
And, mother, of my dreariness, behold me very weary.

"Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering.
The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine."
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,
And her and them, all mournfully, to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint, and gently shook her head—
"The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*," she said:
"The little flowers we brought with us before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at Heaven,—but *I* must turn away,—
Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face."

She spoke with passion after pause—"And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?—
If we whose virtue is so weak, should have a will so strong,—
And stand blind on the rocks, to choose the right path from the wrong?
To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and Heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which beareth seven times seven?
A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the breast
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best!"
Then breaking into tears,—"Dear God," she cried, "and must we see
All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere we go to THEE?
We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or hear Thee in the wind?
Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the light behind?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal, to need Thee on that road;
But woe being come, the soul is dumb, that crieth not on 'God.'"

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever mused thus—
"*The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left for *us?*"
But her young brother stayed his sobs, and knelt beside her knee,
—"Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word for me?"
She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers bloomed no more—
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour before!
Both perished mute, for lack of root, earth's nourishment to reach;—
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith), some sweetness out of each!

The Mournful Mother,

(OF THE DEAD BLIND).

Dost thou weep, mournful mother,
For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other,
Sweet counsel ye can have?—
That *he*, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—

Which now, at dream-time, will not
  Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still ofter,
  Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
  By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mournful mother!

But since to him when living,
  Thou wert both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
  From a high sphere alone
Sustain that exaltation—
  Expand that tender light;
And hold in mother-passion,
  Thy Blessed, in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
  From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway
  To mediate 'twixt the two,—
Into the sudden glory,
  Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
  At once to Light and GOD!—
For the first face, beholding
  The Christ's in its divine,—
For the first place, the golden
  And tideless hyaline;
With trees, at lasting summer,
  That rock to songful sound,
While angels, the new-comer,
  Wrap a still smile around!
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
  His happy voice he tries,—
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
  Than others, o'er his eyes,—
Yet still, in all the singing,
  Thinks haply of thy song

Which, in his life's first springing,
  Sang to him all night long,—
And wishes it beside him,
  With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,—
  To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mournful mother;
  Thy blind boy walks in light!
Ye wait for one another,
  Before God's infinite!
But *thou* art now the darkest,
  Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
  Content that it be so;—
Until ye two give meeting
  Where the great Heaven-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
  As once thou leddest *his!*
Wait on, thou mournful mother.

A Valediction.

God be with thee, my beloved,—God be with thee!
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north.—
Moor and pleasance, all around thee and beneath thee,
Looking equal in one snow!
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so.
Alas! I can but teach thee—
God be with thee, my beloved,—God be with thee!

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—can I teach thee?
If I said, Go left or right,
The counsel would be light,—
The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee!
My right would show like left;
My raising would depress thee,—
My choice of light would blind thee,—
Of way, would leave behind thee,—
Of end, would leave bereft!
Alas! I can but bless thee—
May God teach thee, my beloved,—may God teach thee!

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I bless thee?
What blessing word can I,
From mine own tears, keep dry?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee?

My good reverts to ill;
My calmnesses would move thee,—
My softnesses would prick thee,—
My bindings up would break thee,—
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas! I can but love thee—
May GOD bless thee, my beloved,—may GOD bless thee!

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I love thee?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?
My love-kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it:
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,—
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And *I*—I can but die!
May GOD love thee, my beloved,—may GOD love thee!

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

Lady Geraldine's Courtship.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A Poet writes to his Friend. Place—A Room in Wycombe Hall. Time—Late in the evening.

Dear my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit
o'er you;
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run
at will!
I am humbled who was humble! Friend,—I bow my head
before you!
You should lead me to my peasants!—but their faces are
too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter; she is proud and she is
noble;
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the
perfumed air;
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to
trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown, is softened in her
hair.

She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant steam-
eagles
Follow far on the directing of her floating dove-like hand—
With a thundrous vapour trailing, underneath the starry
vigils,
So to mark upon the blasted heaven, the measure of her land.

There be none of England's daughters, who can show a
prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors suing, she has looked in her disdain :
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
peasants ;
What was *I* that I should love her—save for feeling of the
pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other
things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abase-
ment,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her, as her chariot sweeps their
doorways ;
She hath blest their little children,—as a priest or queen
were she !
Oh, too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile, which she used, to smile
on *me.*

She has members in the commons, she has lovers in the
palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine :
Even the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red wine
and the chalice :
Oh, and what was *I* to love her ? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet
uses—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair !
Nymphs of old Parnassus mountain, we are wont to call the
Muses—
And in silver-footed climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the people praised me,
With their critical deductions for the modern writer's fault ;

I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us, the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence ;—"Will your book appear this summer ?"
Then returning to each other—"Yes, our plans are for the moors ;"
Then with whisper dropped behind me—"There he is ! the latest comer !
Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures.

"Quite low born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind ;
You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he writes no satire,—
These new charmers keep their serpents with the antique sting resigned."

I grew colder, I grew colder, as I stood up there among them,—
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow ;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overrung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her ! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
"Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that, able to confer it,
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall ?"

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her
speaking;
But because a silence followed it, blushed scarlet, as for
shame;
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—"I am
seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my
claim.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a
woman,"—
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her
mouth)
"But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at
gloaming,
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

"I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no hive for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the
thrushes first—
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human world
at worst."

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed around
right queenly;
And I bowed—I could not answer! Alternated light and
gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the
room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around
me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind!
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! Oh, the cruel love that
bound me
Up against the boles of cedars, to be shamèd where I pined!

Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's dart has found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains, did with gradual shadow sweep;
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings, at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies, grew restless in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches,
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,—
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river, through the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'er-float the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,

Spread out cheery from the courtyard, till we lost them in the hills;
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens, through the laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded—with the flowings
Of the virginal white vesture, gathered closely to her throat;
With the golden ringlets in her neck, just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies,—
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to study the deep meaning of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smiled constantly: her lips had serious sweetness,
And her front was calm—the dimple rarely rippled on her cheek:
But her deep blue eyes smiled constantly,—as if they had by fitness
Won the secret of a happy dream, she did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden:
And I walked among her noble friends, and could not keep behind;
Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the warden,
Of the birds within these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

"But here, in this swarded circle. into which the limewalk brings us—
Whence the beeches rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,—
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us,
Which the lilies round the basin, may seem pure enough to hear.

"And the air that waves the lilies, waves this slender jet of water,
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint!
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep, she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a fancy quaint.

"Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers!
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:
And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

"That the essential meaning growing, may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought, as I conceive it: it applies more high and low,—
Your true noblemen will often, through right nobleness, grow humble,
And assert an inward honour, by denying outward show."

"Yes, your Silence," said I, "truly holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken!
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law, as most ignoble men.

"Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these British islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds:
Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and for statues like this Silence
Shall accept the rose's marble—in another case, the weed's."

"I let *you* dream," she retorted, "and I grant where'er you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour clear;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book, which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence here."

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation;
Her friends turned her words to laughter, while her lovers deemed her fair,—
A fair woman—flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station,
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!—

With the trees round, not so distant, but you heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
And recoiling backward, trembling with the too much light above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance! and thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me, by the spirit, to her feet—

Why, her greyhound followed also ! dogs—we both were dogs
for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it, and her path lay
through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of oath, and spite of
sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed
along ;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
to-morrow,—
Or to teach the hill-side echo, some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Ay, and sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in
the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before ;
And the river running under ; and across it, from the rowans,
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the air it
bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various, of our
own ;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle inter-
flowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is
folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-dew, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep
down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity !—

Or I read there sometimes, hoarsely, some new poem of my
making—
Oh, your poets never read their own best verses to their
worth,—

For the echo, in you, breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate, through which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,—
She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest—
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light, and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars—
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them—
And had sympathies so ready, open, free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them,
In the birchen wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly;
And she has a grace in being gay, which mourners even approve;

For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so rightly,
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked truly! upon all things—substance—shadow—
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn!

So of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear!
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me, when I said,—"The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly, to the glory of the stars—
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

"For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous, wondrous age,'
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,—
Or if angels will commend us, at the goal of pilgrimage.

"Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
But the child's most gradual learning to walk straightly without bane—?
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestical white horses,
Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by the mane?

"If we sided with the eagles, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely, with one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power conferring—
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death."

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—loved her certes,
As I loved all Heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,—
In a Love content with writing his own name, on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so purely!—thought, no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sate alone—
Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
But she rose above them, smiling down, as Venus down the waves—
And with such a gracious coldness, that they could not press their futures
On that present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene—
For I had been reading Camoëns—that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,—
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine, you *would!*"
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station—
Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read on his brow:
Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—unelastic lips, which seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by the order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of arts, and letters too;

Just a good man, made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that
border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help
the hearkening:
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all
sides, darkening,
And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet that
stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for
wealth, position, . . .
For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
And she answered, answered gently—"Nay, my lord, the old
tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,
should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his he
either drew it,
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best
eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points, less easy to decide."

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow
scorn—
"And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall
be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was
born."

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept
through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang, full-statured in
an hour!

Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimes to power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded!—waved a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes! I felt self-drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can!

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspiration!
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so; for the tiger roars, when speared;
And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet and grew pale:
Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman,
In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers,
Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others!
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though
leaf-verdant,—
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purples
and the gold,
And the "landed stakes" and Lordships—all that spirits pure
and ardent
Are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing not to
hold.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love you,
Madam,
But for better souls, that nearer to the height of yours have
trod—
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to
Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

"Yet, O God" (I said), "O grave" (I said), "O mother's
heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and
little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-
closing!
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

"Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth—
that needs no learning;
That comes quickly—quick as sin does! ay, and often works
to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your
scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling
breath within.

"What right have you, Madam, gazing in your shining
mirror daily,
Getting, so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must
adore,—

While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily, . . .
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more.

"Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish, if its smile were not so human,—
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace:

"What right *can* you have, God's other works, to scorn, despise, . . . revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
But as Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them,
In the hope of living—dying,—near that sweetness of your mouth?

"Have you any answer, Madam? If my spirit were less earthy—
If its instrument were gifted with more vibrant silver strings—
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—'Behold me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a king.'

"As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her—
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonour—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!"

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need
not write them fuller;
And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of
tears—
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast had scarce
been duller,
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the
spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with
thunder,
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like
a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up, as if
in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said "Bertram!" it
was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with
queenly bearing,
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore, I have given you a full
hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less,
instead"—

I had borne it!—but that "Bertram"—why, it lies there on
the paper
A mere word, without her accents,—and you cannot judge
the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion! I seemed swimming
in a vapour,—
And her gentleness did shame me, whom her scorn made
desolate.

So, struck backward, and exhausted with that inward flow of
passion

Which had passed, in deadly rushing, into forms of abstract truth,—
With a logic agonising through unfit denunciation,—
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs of youth, —

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely,
I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed was true—
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could do !—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
As a wild horse, through a city, runs with lightning in his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her ! Do you blame me, friend, for weakness ?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me !—fell before her like a stone ;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels of blackness !
When the light came I was lying in this chamber—and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the gate—
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,—
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone!
I shall leave this house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the orient, I depart with no last gazes,
No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing for her hands,—
Out of reach of her derisions, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious;
I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again!
There's no room for tears of weakness, in the blind eyes of a Phemius:
Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then*.

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell his tears on every leaf:
Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream—a dream of mercies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and pale!

'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
Sent to sweep a patient quiet, o'er the tossing of his wail.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid,
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?"

With a murmurous stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows;
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever,
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—"Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the cheeks of calm expression—there, the lips of silent passion,
Curvèd like an archer's bow, to send the bitter arrows out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture;
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush! no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly;
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me,
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one as *I*?"

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea;
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through this dream of THEE!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
While the shining tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks."

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—
And she whispered low in triumph—"It shall be as I have sworn!
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing, that men call him lowly born!"

A VISION OF POETS.

A Vision of Poets.

"O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power.
Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spraye?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye.
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?
Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on."

BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night:

And thus he rose disquieted,
With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
And in the forest wandered;

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades,
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver: pavement fair,
The antique Dryads scarce would dare
To footprint o'er, if such were there,

But rather sit by breathlessly,
With tears in their large eyes to see
The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet—who with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A Beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand, without intent,
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument.

Nor jarred it with his mood when as,
With a faint stirring down the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then—as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Dropping from Heaven's encyclic rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim—

Much less a lady, riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,—
"What, ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night in ghostly chace

"Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
Who chaunts between the nightingales,
And over sleep by song prevails?"

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone: "Now, nay,"
He answered,—"slumber passed away,

"Compelled by instincts in my head,
That I should see to-night instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake :—"The moon's regality
Will hear no praise ! she is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth ;
This is my kingdom—I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that mourned—
"To their worth, lady ! They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

"To their worth ! Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold ; and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

"The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief, whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

"Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets !—Why should I be moved
In saying both are more beloved ?"

"The south can judge not of the north ;"
She resumed calmly—"I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, sooth ! and to anoint them all
With blessed oils, which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, "as flowers do, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young !

"As sweet as window eglantine—
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse plucketh at their sign !

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud,
Which the fair Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who, having lived, dies well,—
And holy sweet the asphodel,

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this!

"Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death,—and even before:
Sweet, consecrated evermore!

"What! dost thou judge it a strange thing,
That poets, crowned for conquering,
Should bear some dust from out the ring?

"Come on with me, come on with me;
And learn in coming! Let me free
Thy spirit into verity."

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went,—
'Twas a bee's hum—a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did, far and fair,
O'er-swim the masses everywhere:

Save where the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory! You may see
The trees grow rarer presently,—
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with night,—

A fiery throb in every star
With burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar,—

A wild brown moorland underneath,
Low glimmering here and thither, with
White pools in breaks, as blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood;

Since thunder stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow:

A monumental tree . . . alone,
That will not bend, if tempest-blown,
But break off sudden like a stone,—

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

"Drink," said the lady, very still—
"Be holy and cold." He did her will,
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto,
Was bare of trees: there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies fair to view,

Which sullen on the water sate,
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

"Drink," said the lady, grave and slow,
"World's use behoveth thee to know."
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and rushes
That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime: the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

"Drink," said the lady, sad and slow—
"World's love behoveth thee to know."
He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-cast

From yew and cypress, and from trails
Of hemlock clasping the trunk-scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dareth stoop
Where those moist branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up:

He hears a silent, gliding coil—
The snakes breathe hard against the soil—
His foot slips in their slimy oil:

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Right in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:
"Must I drink *here*?" he questioned meek
The lady's will, with utterance weak.

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be"—
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
"Behoves thee know world's cruelty."

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth,
As if from rivers of the south.

His lip sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like—rose and sank,—

And he swooned backward to a dream,
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this:
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread!
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold;
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold!

But SHE was holy, pale, and high—
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up!" said she, with voice where song
Eddied through speech—"rise up! be strong;
And learn how right avengeth wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet:
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace.

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a pure light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,

Broke full against the arched roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off,
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,—
Then, poising the white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave.

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they showed,
In the pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend;

The arches, like a giant's bow,
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The niched saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,
That central altar stood serene
In its clear stedfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw,
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate, and refrain
From vibratory after-pain ;
And his brow's height was sovereign—

On the vast background of his wings
Arose his image ! and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart !) before,
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes :
While at his side, 'twixt lights and glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar,—pale and crowned,
With sovran eyes of depth profound.

Deathful their faces were ; and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified;

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest!

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirit seemed to sink in him,
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current—These were poets true
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were—of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakspeare! on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world! Oh, eyes sublime—
With tears and laughters for all time!

Here, Æschylus,—the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did,—he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child

Right in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which down the trees,
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban! Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind, and deaf, and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls! and bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear,
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul!
And Sappho crowned with aureole

Of ebon curls on calmed brows—
O poet-woman! none forgoes
The leap, attaining the repose!

Theocritus, with glittering locks,
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks!

And Aristophanes; who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil! shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high!—
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood!
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe, and said "No God,"

Finding no bottom! he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side,

By grace of God! his face is stern,
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he could not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed!
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their locks in one!—The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
Boiardo,—who with laughters filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm! And not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso! bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Corneille—
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple! And Petrarch pale,

Who from his brainlit heart hath thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each perfumed with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,

With murmurs of a purple ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse! And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Between the bright curls blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon!

And bold De Vega,—who breathed quick
Song after song, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetorick.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't,—
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim!
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision! Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonaire
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they drew
From outward Nature, to renew
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows, when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind; and Keats the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave
And salt as life ! forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and other more)
The lighted altar booming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule !

All, still as stone, and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved, and not by sense.

All still and calm as statue stone !
The life lay coiled unforegone
Up in the awful eyes alone,

And flung its length out through the air
Into whatever eyes should dare
To front them—Awful shapes and fair !

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet,

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant,—as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard ;—

"World's use is cold—world's love is vain,—
World's cruelty is bitter bane ;
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

"Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood! Dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

"His organ's pedals strike along
These poets' hearts, which metal-strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

"From which foundation he can guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified!

"Whereat God's blessing . . . IBARAK (יברך)
Breathes back this music—folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack:

"And men walk in it, crying 'Lo!
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so!

"'The stars walk statelier round the edge
O' the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege.

"'No little flower but joys or grieves—
Full life is rustling in the sheaves;
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves!'

"So works this music on the earth!
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To add another worth to worth—

"A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

"Now hearken!" Then the Poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were mixed,
Dim, faint; and thrilled and throbbed betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed:

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,

A Harmony that finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse!

A Harmony sublime and plain
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplext chords, and soared at once,
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves, as
It passed to God! The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass!

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell,
Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly—
"Tried poets, hearken and reply!

"Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the Jubilant,—

"If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance; and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

"If as two colours must be viewed
In a seen image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good,—

"If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

"If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
Their oracles, and merit trust,—

"If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world, must pale their lips,
And leave their own souls in eclipse—

"If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,—
Because that bolt (in man's reverse),

"Was shot to the heart o' the wood, and lies
Wedged deepest in the best!—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

"From marshalled angels, must shut down
Their lids, first, upon sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

"If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own lack, from final lack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

"Those temporal sorrows, till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

"If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

"What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

"Or, oh ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me,
To make the world this harmony,—

"Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?"—
The Spirits bent
Their awful brows and said—"Content!"

Content! it sounded like *Amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men—
An affirmation full of pain

And patience!—ay, of glorying,
And adoration,—as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white,
And arches crossed, being clear to sight,

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—"Lo! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

"This pedal strikes out in the air!
My instrument hath room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

"Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

"What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift!"

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed—
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—an as he should faint!
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralised on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow,
If *they* walked to, instead of fro.

And some with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony.

And some composing sudden sighs,
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear.

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid—the wrinkling of the brow,—
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So, mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead—though he lacked
An inch of any! And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,—
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it. One, his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate,
Like Æschylus—and tried to prate
On trolling tongue, of fate and fate!

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's! one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard shut lips. And one, that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight
For great world-laughter, as it might
For great world-wrath, with equal right!

Out came a speaker from that crowd,
To speak for all—in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel.—"Thus,
O angel, who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,—

"Fit service from sufficient soul—
Hand-service, to receive world's dole—
Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show.

"Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up! fie!—That rage
Barbaric, antedates the age!
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back—must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave,
No, nor yet martyrs! if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to . . . summer eve.

'And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,—
Poising between his smiles fair-fed,
Each separate phrase till finished;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn—

Ay, jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth! A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely—they had passed!

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe,—
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying—"If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it.

"For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay short comings evermore.

"Accept me therefore—Not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered! for my soul is nice,

"And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

"I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud! So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark!

"I ask no wages—seek no fame!
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

"I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose,
Mine inward music out to use.

"I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain,—

"Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound,—

"Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past!"

The angel's smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking—ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad gloriole, round his brow,
Did vibrate with the light below;
But what he said I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, glossing down
Their eyes capacious of renown.

My soul, which saw these things, was blind
By what it looked on! I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command,

Straight through the haze—And so, as erst,
A strain, more noble than the first,
Mused in the organ, and outburst.

With giant march from floor to roof,
Rose the full notes; now parted off
In pauses massively aloof,

Like measured thunders; now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind,
Which won together sense and mind!

Now flashing sharp on sharp along,
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off into a song

Fed upon minors,—starry sounds
Moved on free-paced, in silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close,
Survived in confluent underflows,
Symphonious with the next that rose:

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backwards (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought! and as a roll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned,—
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon, in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory, with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted—slow!

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory!

Then he looked round! he was alone—
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that seared the ground,—

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips—
World's cruelty attaints his lips;

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill!

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
And mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood,
And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—"O God, my God!"

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,—
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood,
He prayed along the solitude,—
"THOU, Poet-God, art great and good!

"And though we must have, and have had
Right reason to be earthly sad,—
THOU, Poet-God, art great and glad."

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart—
We press too close in church and mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps ! From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round ;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way ; and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of dew which slideth droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing, as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good !

But hark ! a distant sound that grows !
A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
A rustling murmur, not of those !

A breezy noise, which is not breeze !
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees ;

Fair little children, morning-bright,
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,—
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed—but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird ; and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
"Hush ! keep this morning undefiled."

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres ;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
"What are your palms for ?"—"To be spread,"
He answered, "on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month ; and now
The world, which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms—They must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, "Did he foresee
Any such honour ?" "Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he.

"But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

"A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked ;

"Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

"With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on his iris broad,
The images of things bestowed

"By the chief Poet,—'God!' he cried,
'Be praised for anguish, which has tried;
For beauty, which has satisfied:—

"'For this world's presence, half within
And half without me—sound and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

"'I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world! Both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb!

"'I am content to be so weak,—
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

"'I am content to be so bare
Before the archers! everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

"'I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

"'I am content to feel the step
Of each pure image!—let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep.

"'I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"'Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

"'Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive!
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

"'In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

"'*I know*—is all the mourner saith,—
Knowledge by suffering entereth ;
And Life is perfected by Death !'"

The child spake nobly. Strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear,
Charged with high meanings, did appear,—

And fair to see, his form and face,—
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew :
An orient beam, which pierced it through,
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
Traced on its brightness, up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown.

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go,
With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered ;—"Nay,
Not *so*," the childish voice did say—
"That poet turned him, first, to pray

"In silence ; and God heard the rest,
Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

"Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—'Come,'
He said, 'come nearer! Let the bloom

"'Of life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

"'Come, kiss me!' So the one in truth
Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth.

"And, in that kiss of Love, was won
Life's manumission! All was done—
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone?*

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled—his lips shook,
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates, though it is not struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved,
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"*I*," softly said the child; and then,
"*I*," said he louder, once again.
"*His son*,—my rank is among men.

"And now that men exalt his name,
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

"He did not die alone; nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, *come nearer!*—and I come.

"Glory to God!" resumed he,—
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears, which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
"That poet now hath entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs, in troops,
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner Hopes."

"But *thou*," I murmured,—to engage
The child's speech farther—"hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage."

"Glory to God—to God!" he saith—
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH;
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH!"

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

Rhyme of the Duchess May.

In the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,—
Toll slowly!
And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the Dead,
When the rebecks are all done."

Six abeiles i' the kirkyard grow, on the northside in a row,—
Toll slowly!
And the shadows of their tops, rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,—
Toll slowly!
And between the river flowing, and the fair green trees a growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow grey:—
Toll slowly!
Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low hill-ranges,
And the river on its way.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,—
Toll slowly!
While the trees' and rivers' voices flowed between the solemn noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the time
Toll slowly!
And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged—
Toll slowly!
And three hundred years had stood, mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart, having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly!
And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt, large and red, on the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly!
Lance and spearhead on the height, bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly!
Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,—
Toll slowly!
And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood,
And to-night, anears its fall.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,—
Toll slowly!
One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the doors,
"May good angels bless our home."

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,—
Toll slowly!
Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of youth
Did light outward its own sighs.

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the Earl
Toll slowly!
Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,
To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood,—
Toll slowly!
Unto both those lords of Leigh, spake she out right sovranly,
"My will runneth as my blood."

"And while this same blood makes red this same right hand's veins," she said,—
Toll slowly!
"'Tis my will, as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged."

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—
Toll slowly!
"Good my niece, that hand withal, looketh somewhat soft and small,
For so large a will, in sooth."

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,—
Toll slowly!
"Little hand clasps muckle gold; or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!"

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,—

Toll slowly!

"He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death."

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—

Toll slowly!

"Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel," quoth she,
"Though he moans not where he lies.

"But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward!"—

Toll slowly!

"By that grave, my lords, which made me, orphaned girl and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward."

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty tread,—

Toll slowly!

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train, along the night-storm rode amain:—

Toll slowly!

Wild the steeds of lord and serf, struck their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain, the kinsmen's train, along the storm pursued amain—

Toll slowly!

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling, hoof on hoof,
In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight, on his red-roan steed of might,—
Toll slowly!
And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

"Dost thou fear?" he said at last:—"Nay!" she answered him in haste,—
Toll slowly!
"Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind—
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!"

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks spread,—
Toll slowly!
Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered—down the banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly!
In the courtyard rose the cry—"Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!"
But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed his mane and kissed his neck,—
Toll slowly!
"I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,"
Were the words which she did speak.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day,—
Toll slowly!
When five hundred archers tall, stand beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly!
And a fortnight's siege is done—and, except the Duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eye so grey of blee,—
Toll slowly!
And thin lips, that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

Cried aloud—"So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess May!"—
Toll slowly!
"Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

"Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning of the hound?"—
Toll slowly!
"Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,"—
Toll slowly!
"Yet thine old love's faulchion brave, is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove!—if a wife's name thee behove,"—
Toll slowly!
"Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back troth,"—

Toll slowly!

"He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
'I forbid you—I am loth!'

"I will wring thy fingers pale, in the gauntlet of my mail,"—

Toll slowly!

"'Little hand and muckle gold' close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did to prevail."

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly!

O and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

Toll slowly!

"Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my Lord of Leigh,—
But thou boastest little wit."

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly,—

Toll slowly!

She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so plain,
—"Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!"

Straight she called her maidens in—"Since ye gave me blame herein,"—

Toll slowly!

"That a bridal such as mine, should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

"It is three months gone to-day, since I gave mine hand away."—

Toll slowly!

"Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

"On your arms I loose mine hair ;—comb it smooth and crown it fair,"—
Toll slowly !
"I would look in purple-pall, from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's there !"

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly !
On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean down passionate,—
Toll slowly !
They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter therewithal,
With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the stone,—
Toll slowly !
"Sword," he thought, with inward laugh, "ill thou servest for a staff,
When thy nobler use is done !

"Sword, thy nobler use is done !—tower is lost, and shame begun :"—
Toll slowly !
"If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

"If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,"—
Toll slowly !
"But if *I* die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

"Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the brake,"—

Toll slowly!

"Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast,
And none of these will wake.

"And no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too heavily,"—

Toll slowly!

"And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

"Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,"—

Toll slowly!

"Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
Though never a word she saith—

"These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily:"—

Toll slowly!

"And if *I* die here apart,—o'er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

"When the foe hath heard it said—'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'"—

Toll slowly!

"That new corse new peace shall bring; and a blessed, blessed thing,
Shall the stone be at its head.

"Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,"—

Toll slowly!

"Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride,
Whose sole sin was love of me.

"With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat:"

Toll slowly!

"And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head,
While her tears drop over it.

"She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's prayers,"—

Toll slowly!

"But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

"Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,—

Toll slowly!

"That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief."

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange and dim,—

Toll slowly!

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face to face
With the foe instead of him.

"One last oath, my friends, that wear faithful hearts to do and dare!"—

Toll slowly!

"Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service worth the cost,"
—Bold they stood around to swear,

"Each man clasp my hand, and swear, by the deed we failed in there,"—

Toll slowly!

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night!"—
Pale they stood around—to swear.

"One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do and dare!"—
Toll slowly!
"Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all,—
Guide him up the turret-stair.

"Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height!"—
Toll slowly!
Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and far,—
He shall bear me far to-night."

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so,—
Toll slowly!
—"'Las! the noble heart," they thought,—"he in sooth is grief-distraught.—
Would, we stood here with the foe!"

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply,—
Toll slowly!
"Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here, must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly."

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,—
Toll slowly!
Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors;
But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower-chambère, did the Duchess May repair,—
Toll slowly!
"Tell me now what is your need," said the lady, "of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?"

Calm she stood! unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe,—
Toll slowly!
And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like yesterday,"—
Toll slowly!
"One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows wild of speech.—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

"In the east tower, high'st of all,—loud he cries for steed from stall,"—
Toll slowly!
"'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

"And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall."—
Toll slowly!
"Wifely prayer meets deathly need! may the sweet Heavens hear thee plead,
If he rides the castle-wall."

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,—
Toll slowly!
And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

"Get thee in, thou soft ladiè!—here is never a place for thee!"—

Toll slowly!

"Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh."

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,—

Toll slowly!

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—

Toll slowly!

"Go to, faithful friends, go to!—Judge no more what ladies do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride!"

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke:—

Toll slowly!

Soft he neighed to answer her; and then followed up the stair,
For the love of her sweet look.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,—

Toll slowly!

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her treading,
Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof did fall,—

Toll slowly!

Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall!

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently,—
Toll slowly!
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her eyes,
Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints bless thy life!"—
Toll slowly!
"In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
But not of my noble wife."

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun:"—
Toll slowly!
"But by all my womanhood,—which is proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one.

"Now by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's verity,"—
Toll slowly!
"In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

"By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,"—
Toll slowly!
"If this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*.

"So the sweet saints with me be" (did she utter solemnly),—
Toll slowly!
"If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*."

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter well,—
Toll slowly!

"Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

She clang closer to his knee—"Aye, beneath the cypress-tree!"—
Toll slowly!
"Mock me not; for otherwhere, than along the greenwood fair,
Have I ridden fast with thee!

"Fast I rode, with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house!"—
Toll slowly!
"What! and would you men should reck, that I dared more for love's sake,
As a bride than as a spouse?

"What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,"—
Toll slowly!
"That a bride may keep your side, while through castle-gate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,—
Toll slowly!
With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

Twice he wrung her hands in twain; but the small hands closed again,—
Toll slowly!
Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track,
With a frantic clasp and strain!

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and door,—
Toll slowly!
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of "kill!" and "flee!"
Strike up clear the general roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—but they closed and clung again,—
Toll slowly!
Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shuddering lips half-shut,—
Toll slowly!
Her head fallen as in swound,—hair and knee swept on the ground,—
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed, back-thrown on the slippery coping-stone,—
Toll slowly!
Back the iron hoofs did grind, on the battlement behind,
Whence a hundred feet went down.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank bestrode,
Toll slowly!
"Friends, and brothers! save my wife!—Pardon, sweet, in change for life,—
But I ride alone to God!"

Straight as if the Holy name did upbreathe her as a flame,—
Toll slowly!
She upsprang, she rose upright!—in his selle she sate in sight;
By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at rest,—
Toll slowly!
"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in the beechwood's old chapelle!
But the passing-bell rings best."

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose —in vain,—
Toll slowly!
For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge, rears amain.

And he hangs, he rocks between—and his nostrils curdle in,—
Toll slowly!
And he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall off;
And his face grows fierce and thin!

And a look of human woe, from his staring eyes did go,—
Toll slowly!
And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below,——

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing-bell," still she cried, "i' the old chapelle!"—
Toll slowly!
Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell!

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly!
And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the kirkyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run,—
Toll slowly!
And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree, I a little grave did see,
Toll slowly!
Where was graved,—"HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,
"EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE."

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,—
Toll slowly!
Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way?

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy crash,
Toll slowly!
Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilled—now, your pulses are all stilled,—
Toll slowly!
Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave to-day was filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,
Toll slowly!
And the children might be bold to pluck the kingscups from your mould,
Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the alder near, in spring,—
Toll slowly!
Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong; cold and heat ye take not wrong:—
Toll slowly!
When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Toll slowly!
And I said in underbreath,—all our life is mixed with death,—
And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly!
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest.

The Lady's Yes.

"YES!" I answered you last night;
"No!" this morning, Sir, I say!
Colours, seen by candle-light,
Will not look the same by day.

When the tabors played their best,
Lamps above, and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No!*

Call me false, or call me free—
Vow, whatever light may shine,
No man on thy face shall see
Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both—
Time to dance is not to woo—
Wooer light makes fickle troth—
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you!*

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly, as the thing is high;
Bravely, as for life and death—
With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true—
Ever true, as wives of yore—
And her *Yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

The Poet and the Bird.

A Fable.

Said a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.
There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear, than any song of thine!"

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting;
"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?"
"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun."

The poet went out weeping,—and died abroad, bereft there—
The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails!—
Yet, when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's!

The Lost Bower.

In the pleasant orchard closes,
"God bless all our gains," say we;
But "May God bless all our losses,"
Better suits with our degree.—
Listen gentle—ay, and simple! Listen children on the knee!

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played—
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple blossoms, running up from glade to glade.

There is one hill I see nearer,
In my vision of the rest;
And a little wood seems clearer,
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement;
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through content.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound:
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground:
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad with sound.

For you hearken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all;
And the squirrels crack the filberts, through their cheerful madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale;
And five apple-trees stand, dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their "All hail!"

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise;
Close as brother leans to brother,
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern Hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions, through the sunshine and the snow.*

Yet in childhood little prized I
That fair walk and far survey;
'Twas a straight walk, unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay—
Up and down—as dull as grammar on an eve of holiday!

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced, with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so!
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where they would go.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude!
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions; and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving, in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the lichens which entrapped me, and the barrier branches strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonied—I was gladdened unaware!

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close;
And the open ground was suited
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightening
All adown its silver rind;
For as some trees draw the lightning
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine, from the sky where it was shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of beauty, which I sing of thus to you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter,
Than for any woodland wide!
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through, from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music, than for footsteps on the walk.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place!
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was inwrought with eglantine;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

Rose-trees, either side the door, were
Growing lithe and growing tall;
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose, and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot;
And a round elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence, very rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,—
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made before me,
With fair counterparts in shade,
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

"Is such pavement in a palace?"
So I questioned in my thought:
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling,
Quick I turned my childish face;
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place,
To the trees which surely knew it, in partaking of the grace.

Where's no foot of human creature,
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why is nature sudden bland,
Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause, in tender rueing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness worn?

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong;
Who, surviving all that chancèd
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland, on the last true poet's song?

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,—
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming, on the blessed Sabbath days?

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my Fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than heard.

Softly, finely, it inwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little marble Naiad, sitting smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed,
Which has sucked the milk of waters, at the oldest river-head.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-soul she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me!

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes,
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,
Give me "Yea" or give me "Nay"—
Though my soul were nympholeptic,
As I heard that virëlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion,
Dropped the music to my feet,
Like a garment rustling downwards!—such a silence followed it.

Heart and head beat through the quiet,
Full and heavily, though slower;
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past;
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains,
I stood silently and still;
Drawing strength for fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonaire good-will.

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
To the beauty of the truth;
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will never more missay.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower, not built by one;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison;
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning!
This is truth in its pure grace;)
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew—
By the advent of the snow-drop—by the rosemary and rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I never more upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair—
Never garden-creeper crossed it,
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith—
Under leaf and over brier—
Through the thickets, out of breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as death.

But his sword of mettle clashèd,
And his arm smote strong, I ween;
And her dreaming spirit flashèd
Through her body's fair white screen,—
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedarn alleys green.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place, 'mid Colone's olives swart.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun;
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked down.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again?
Ah! I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother-men!

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh many a pleasure—
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure—
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is won—

Exultations in the far light,
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet, for the very shame of bliss!

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break ;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

Some respect to social fictions
Hath been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflections,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false Humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look away,—
Ye would answer me, "Farewell ! you
Make sad company to-day ;
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say."

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground, with power ;
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower !
And I suffered many losses ; and my first was of the bower.

Laugh ye ? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat ;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great !

One who knew me in my childhood,
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same !
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes overcame.

On this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind—
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined,
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor pined!

From those overblown faint roses,
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
For the winters and the summers which have passed me overhead.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves;
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth!
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the leaves.

Is the bower lost, then? Who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the solstice and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost—

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—ALL IS LOST . . . and *won!*"

A Child Asleep.

How he sleepeth ! having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore,
From his pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures, to make room for more—
Sleeping near the withered nosegay, which he pulled the day before.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking !
Throw them earthward where they grew.
Dim are such, beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto—
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath—
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dreameth on.
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won !
Darker wert thou in the garden, yestermorn, by summer-sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee,—were the clouds away !
'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing ?—Stars that seem the mutest, go in music all the way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As in sunset, many a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
With their diadems of youth
Striking on thy ringlets sheenly,—
While thou smilest, . . . not in sooth
Thy smile . . . but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial mouth.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it fade.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb—
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room—
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as they come.

Speak not! he is consecrated—
Breathe no breath across his eyes.
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching,—held in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him—father—mother?
Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping, and confess yourselves too weak?

He is harmless—ye are sinful,—
Ye are troubled—he, at ease!
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase—
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by his peace—and go in peace.

The Cry of the Children.

"φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδερκεσθε μ' ομμασιν, τεκνα."—MEDEA.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,—
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows;
The young birds are chirping in the nest;
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!—
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?—
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago—
The old tree is leafless in the forest—
The old year is ending in the frost—
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest—
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's grief abhorrent, draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy—
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary;"
"Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek!

Ask the old why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,—
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old!

"True," say the young children, "it may happen
That we die before our time!
Little Alice died last year—the grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her—
Was no room for any work in the close clay:
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries!-
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes,—
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud, by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time!"

Alas, the wretched children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city—
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do—
Pluck you handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty—
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap—
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.

Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping—
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark, underground—
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
Their wind comes in our faces,—
Till our hearts turn,—our heads, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places—
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling—
Turns the long light that droppeth down the wall—
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—
All are turning, all the day, and we with all!—
And all day, the iron wheels are droning;
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth—
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
Let them prove their inward souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!—
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
As if Fate in each were stark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
That they look to Him and pray—
So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.

They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word!
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember;
And at midnight's hour of harm,—
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.*
We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"Up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find!
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations; and comes in time to remind me (with other noble instances) that we have some brave poetic heat of literature still,—though open to the reproach, on certain points, of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.

Do ye hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving—
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you;
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun:
They know the grief of men, but not the wisdom;
They sink in the despair, without the calm—
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,—
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly
No dear remembrance keep,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly:
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For you think you see their angels in their places,
With eyes meant for Deity;—
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants,
And your purple shews your path;
But the child's sob curseth deeper in the silence
Than the strong man in his wrath!"

Crowned and Wedded.

When last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight—
To erase it with a solemn vow,—a princely vow—to rule—
A priestly vow,—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,—
A very godlike vow,—to rule in right and righteousness,
And with the law and for the land!—so God the vower bless!

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled scene.
The priests stood stoled in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in theirs,
And so, the collared knights,—and so, the civil ministers,—
And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages best
At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east and west—
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, new crowned, flashed coronets to light!—
And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty!
And so the Dead—who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
There, verily an awful state maintaining evermore—
The statesman, whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er it be—
The courtier, who, for no fair queen, will rise up to his knee—
The court-dame, who, for no court-tire, will leave her shroud behind—
The laureate, who no courtlier rhyme than "dust to dust" can find—

The kings and queens who having made that vow and worn
that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown!
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them?—what meaning can it
have?—
The King of kings, the rights of death—God's judgment and
the grave!
And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair queen
had vowed,
The living shouted "May she live! Victoria, live!" aloud—
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
"The blessings happy monarchs have, be thine, O crowned
queen!"

But now before her people's face she bendeth her's anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and in that oath, her childhood put away—
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
Oh, lovely lady!—let her vow!—such lips become such vows,—
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal brows!
Oh, lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let her vow to love!—
And though she be no less a queen—with purples hung above,
The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to
ground,—
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
While loving hopes, for retinues, about her sweetness wait!—
SHE vows to love, who vowed to rule—the chosen at her side—
Let none say, God preserve the Queen!—but rather, Bless the
bride!—
None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the
dream
Wherein no monarch, but a wife, she to herself may seem!
Or if ye say, Preserve the Queen!—oh, breathe it inward low—
She is a *woman*, and *beloved!*—and 'tis enough but so!
Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the
hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady of the land!—

And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts, and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing!

And now, upon our Queen's last vow, what blessings shall we pray?
None straitened to a shallow crown, will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—they must be broad as free—
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity!
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—and true hearts pray between,—
"The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crowned Queen!"

Crowned and Buried.

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great word,
Compàct of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword,
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

Napoleon! Nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

Napoleon ! Sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem : children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call :
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid !
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries : and the Ægyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand "For ever."

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Egyptian tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness ! Shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice,
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

The world's face changed to hear it ! Kingly men
Came down, in chidden babes' bewilderment,
From autocratic places—each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing !—then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

Napoleon ! and the torrid vastitude
Of India felt, in throbbings of the air,
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood !
Napoleon—from the Russias, west to Spain !
And Austria trembled—till ye heard her chain.

And Germany was 'ware—and Italy,
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked,—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,

To serve a newer !—Ay ! and Frenchmen cast
A future from them, nobler than her past.

For, verily, though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world,—none gave so much
As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, to freedom stretched, dropped paralysed
To wield a sword, or fit an undersized

King's crown to a great man's head ! And though along
Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

Napoleon ! 'twas a high name lifted high !
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere,
And open a clear sight, beyond the sky,
Of sùpreme empire ! this of Earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun!

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,—
And finding the long-invocated peace
A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine, too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo !

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose—
The nations stood up mute to count their dead—
And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry—
Died of their mercies, mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept him
With a green willow for all pyramid,—

Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him
And parted the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

Nay! not so long!—France kept her old affection,
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
Until dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, "Behold, thou England! I would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave."

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
"Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me."
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim—
But ask a little room too . . . for thy shame!

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare, and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England! men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

I would that hostile fleets had scarred thy bay
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a *shadow*—not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun!
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

And since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust,
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile!—We return
Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn!

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day, a four-years' child might carry it,
Sleek-browed and smiling "Let the burden 'bide!"
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down,

And run back in the chariot-marks of Time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music,—under eagles which
Dyed their ensanguined beaks at Austerlitz!

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!*

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields! provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—And this he *may!* For, dispossessed
Of any godship, lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm!

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a Gaul grave,—another kingdom won—
The last—of few spans—by Napoleon!

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
And high-rayed light. He was a tyrant—granted!
But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

Said yea i' the people's French ! he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply,
"Ye have my glory !"—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true ! but none
Were ruled like slaves ! Each felt Napoleon !

I do not praise this man : the man was flawed,
For Adam—much more, Christ !—his knee, unbent—
His hand, unclean—his aspiration, pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw !—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why, let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

I think this nation's tears, poured thus together,
Nobler than shouts ! I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all :
I think this grave stronger than thrones ! But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be better, I discern not—Angels may.

To Flush, my Dog.

Loving friend, the gift of one,
Who, her own true faith, hath run,
Through thy lower nature ; *
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature !

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, according to my perception, in the bald head.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
  Either side demurely,
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
  Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine, striking this,
  Alchemise its dulness,—
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
  With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
  Kindling, growing larger,—
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curvetting,
  Leaping like a charger.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light;
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
  Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
  Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
  That I praise thy rareness!
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
  And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
  Day and night unweary,—

Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing—
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied,
If a pale thin hand would glide,
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
  Than such chamber-keeping,
"Come out!" praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
  Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
  Render praise and favour!
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
  Therefore, and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
  Often, man or woman,—
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,—
  Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
  Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
  Nevermore, to pat thee!

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
  Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
No man break thy purple cup,
  Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats arointed flee—
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
  Cologne distillations;

Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations!

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature,—
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

The Fourfold Aspect.

WHEN ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
First, the touch of Love, did meet,—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
By the hearthlight cast before,—
And, of all beloveds, none
Standing farther than the door—
Not a name being dear to thought,
With its owner beyond call,—
Nor a face, unless it brought
Its own shadow to the wall,—
When the worst recorded change
Was of cherry dropt from bough,—
When love's sorrow seemed more strange
Than love's treason can seem now,—
Then the Loving took you up
Soft, upon their elder knees,—

Telling why the statues droop
Underneath the churchyard trees,
And how *ye* must lie beneath them,
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
Oh ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail!—
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale!—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago—
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know,—
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena,
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh
And his strong heart, half-immortal,
Met the *keitai* with a cry,—
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race,
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly on his face!
How that true wife said to Pœtus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,—
"Sweet, it hurts not!"—how Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart!—
How King Arthur proved his mission,—
And Sir Roland wound his horn,—
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn,—

Oh! ye lifted up your head, and it seemed the while ye read,

That this death, then, must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned—
The heroic who prevail!
None, be sure, can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale!—
So, awfully, ye thought upon the Dead.

Ay! but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him
Stifling black about his head!
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud—
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within;
All things changed! you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin!
Since,—your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold—
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told!
Happy places have grown holy:
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As a solemn sacrament;
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain!

Household *names*, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divine one, would ye utter
With less trembling in your prayers!
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,—
And your prayers go up in wail!
—"Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
O Thou agonised on cross?
Art Thou reading all its tale?"
So, mournfully, ye think upon the Dead!

Pray, pray, *thou* who also weepest,
And the drops will slacken so;—
Weep, weep!—and the watch thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think! the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun!
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres,—
Learn! the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope! with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair?
Love! the earthly love thou losest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work! make clear the forest-tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land;
Trust! the blessed deathly angels
Whisper, "Sabbath hours at hand!"
By the heart's wound when most gory
By the longest agony,
Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*

And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
"My Beloved, is it so?
Have ye tasted of my woe?—
Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!"—
He stands brightly where the shade is,
With the keys of Death and Hades,
And there, ends the mournful tale!—
So, hopefully, ye think upon the Dead.

A Flower in a Letter.

WRITTEN 1839.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty;
Dear friends upon the garden walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
To pull the least in beauty.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
That learnt, by gazing on the sun,
To counterfeit his shining—
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, hath won anew
A glory . . . in declining.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over:
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

Deep violets you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal:

And cactuses, a queen might don,
If weary of her golden crown,
And still appear as royal!

Pansies for ladies all! I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
A jewel in the mirror:
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

Love's language may be talked with these!
To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter,—
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing!
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
Too earnestly—for seeing.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
A type that seemeth worthy
Of a fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,—
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature, made,—renewing.

No flowers our gardened England hath,
To match with these, in bloom and breath,
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,—
The elements presiding.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding;
But Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden!

And *here*, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine!
And every wind with stolid feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine;

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses, that
No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the noisy sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do,
But make the leaves more brightly shew
In posies newly gathered?—
I look away from all your best;
To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
A little flower half-withered.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened:

And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
  Of aspect shrunk and saddened!

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
  Among the city shadows:
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
  Of nature in the meadows.

How coldly, on its head, did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall,
  In pale refraction driven!
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
  The first sweet news of Heaven!

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
  And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
  And garden-blooms, to look on.

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
  Receiving what was given,—
Oh! if her face she *turned then*, . . .
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
  Upon the flowers of Devon!

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies—warm oracles
  For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Ah, sweetest friends, to mine supplies
  A beauty worthier singing!

The Cry of the Human.

"THERE is no God," the foolish saith,—
But none, "There is no sorrow;"
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow!
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised;
And lips say, "God be pitiful,"
Who ne'er said, "God be praised."
Be pitiful, O God!

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming—
The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,
As help were in the human—
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
We spirits tremble under!—
The hills have echoes; but we find
No answer for the thunder.
Be pitiful, O God!

The battle hurtles on the plains—
Earth feels new scythes upon her:
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest . . . honour,—
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.
Be pitiful, O God!

The plague runs festering through the town,—
And never a bell is tolling;
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling!
The young child calleth for the cup—
The strong man brings it weeping;

The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God!

The plague of gold strikes far and near,—
And deep and strong it enters:
This purple chimar which we wear,
Makes madder than the centaur's.
Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange;
We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God!

The curse of gold upon the land,
The lack of bread enforces—
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's White horses!
The rich preach "rights" and future days,
And hear no angel scoffing:
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God!

We meet together at the feast—
To private mirth betake us—
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us!
We name delight, and pledge it round—
"It shall be ours to-morrow!"
God's seraphs! do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God!

We sit together, with the skies,
The stedfast skies, above us:
We look into each other's eyes,—
"And how long will you love us?"—

The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless—
"Till death us part!"—O words, to be
Our *best* for love the deathless!
Be pitiful, dear God!

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, "Be stronger-hearted!"
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!—
To see a light on dearest brows,
Which is the daylight only!
Be pitiful, O God!

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces:
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places!—
We cannot speak:—we see anew
The hills we used to live in;
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God!

We pray together at the kirk,
For mercy, mercy, solely—
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy!
The corpse is calm below our knee—
Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest or glory!
Be pitiful, O God!

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions;
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations.

Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
  In silence lift their mirrors;
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
  Recoil from their own terrors.
    Be pitiful, O God!

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
  Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding!
The sun strikes, through the farthest mist,
  The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,
  When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass,
  We look upon the longest.
    Be pitiful, O God!

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
  Men whisper, "He is dying:"
We cry no more, "Be pitiful!"—
  We have no strength for crying!—
No strength, no need! Then, Soul of mine,
  Look up and triumph rather—
Lo! in the depth of God's Divine,
  The Son adjures the Father—
    BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

A Lay of the Early Rose.

——— "discordance that can accord."
ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
  A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate,
  On a tall bough and straight!
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

"For if I wait," said she,
"Till times for roses be,—
For the musk-rose and the moss-rose,
Royal-red and maiden-blush rose,—

"What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty?

"Nay, let me in," said she,
"Before the rest are free,—
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

"For I would lonely stand,
Uplifting my white hand,—
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

"Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine?
What addressing, what caressing!
And what thank, and praise, and blessing!

"A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

"Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

"And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently;
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

"Three larks shall leave a cloud;
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,—
Never waiting for the suntide.

"Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,—
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

"I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me,
With my starry aspect dreamy!

"And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,—
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling."

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green;
Scarcely having, scarcely having,
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,—
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so;
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses!

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the happy islands,
Learning music from the silence!

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both;
Doing honour, doing honour,
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down,
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—"Ha, Snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wert enthroned stately
All along my mountains, lately?

"Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?"

—Poor Rose to be misknown!
Would, she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,—
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say—
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly
As at something sad yet holy:

Said, "Verily and thus
It chanceth eke with *us*
Poets singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the watches—

"Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore
In a loneness, in a loneness,
And the nobler for that oneness!

"Holy in voice and heart,—
To high ends, set apart!
All unmated, all unmated,
Because so consecrated!

"But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can praise our lofty nature?

"What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing?

"What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration!

"And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season?

"Drop leaf—be silent song—
Cold things we come among!
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

"Howbeit" (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning)—

"Something, it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty!

"Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be in soul or pleasance,
The Chief Beauty's sign of presence!

"Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us!

"Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, nathless!
Blessed still, and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created.

"Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi.*

"Shame, shame to poet's soul,
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

"Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass, unchallenged by you!

"Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you,
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

"In prayers—that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

"In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission—
With an unfulfilled fruition!

"In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends;
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly!

"In thanks—for all the good,
By poets understood—
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

"For sights of things away,
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

"For life, so lovely-vain,—
For death, which breaks the chain,—
For this sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness!"

Bertha in the Lane.

PUT the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done!
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon,
I am weary! I have sewn
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet,
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

Lean thy face down! drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold.
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth!

Thou art younger by seven years—
Ah! so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such—
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year;
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
"Child, be mother to this child"?

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me;—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love, that left me with a wound,
Life itself, that turneth round!

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,—
In a molten glory shrined,
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves—I cannot speak;
I sob in it, and grow weak.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering,
When the night hides everything.

Little sister, thou art pale!
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again
Lean down closer—closer still!
I have words thine ear to fill,—
And would kiss thee at my will.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

What a day it was, that day!
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away,
At the sight of the great sky:
And the Silence, as it stood
In the Glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud—and bud!

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,—
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the view—
How we talked there! thrushes soft
Sang our pauses out,—or oft
Bleatings took them, from the croft.

Till the pleasure, grown too strong,
Left me muter evermore;
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before;
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

I sate down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain:
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so—do not shake—
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim?
That was wrong perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again!
Women cannot judge for men.

Had he seen thee, when he swore
He would love but me alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee who art best,
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

Could we blame him with grave words,
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
Flying straightway to the light:
Mine are older.—Hush!—Look out—
Up the street! Is none without?
How the poplar swings about!

And that hour—beneath the beech,—
When I listened in a dream,
And he said, in his deep speech,
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain—

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night,—I saw the moon:
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,—
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a "Poor thing" negligence.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
It was best as it befell!
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me! Only blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

Then I always was too grave,—
  Liked the saddest ballads sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
  In our faces, who die young.
  I had died, Dear, all the same—
  Life's long, joyous, jostling game
  Is too loud for my meek shame.

We are so unlike each other,
  Thou and I ; that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
  But for mutual tenderness.
  Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
  And meant, verily, to hold
  Life's pure pleasures manifold.

I am pale as crocus grows
  Close beside a rose-tree's root!
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
  Treads the crocus under foot—
  I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree—
  Thou, like merry summer-bee!
  Fit, that *I* be plucked for *thee*.

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns—
  I have lived my season out,—
And now die of my own thorns
  Which I could not live without.
  Sweet, be merry! How the light
  Comes and goes! If it be night,
  Keep the candles in my sight.

Are there footsteps at the door?
  Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
  Some last word that I might say.
  Nay? So best!—So angels would
  Stand off clear from deathly road,—
  Not to cross the sight of God.

Colder grow my hands and feet—
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,—
That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the Dark up, day and night.

On that grave, drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear,
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessed one,
Thinking of me in the sun—
Or forget me—smiling on!

Art thou near me? nearer? so!
Kiss me close upon the eyes,—
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly as it used to rise,—
When I watched the morning-grey
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

So,—no more vain words be said!
The hosannas nearer roll—
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,—
I am death-strong in my soul!
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss!

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,—
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher,
Up through angels' hands of fire!—
I aspire while I expire!—

That Day.

FOR MUSIC.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

The flowers of the margin are many to see,
For none stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me;
The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,
For my low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
As thy vow did that day!

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be *thou!*
I leave the flower growing—the bird, unreproved,—
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,
And my loving that day?

Go! be sure of my love—by that treason forgiven,—
Of my prayers—by the blessings they win thee from Heaven,—
Of my grief (guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)—
By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's,—
Go,—be clear of that day!

Loved Once.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds; the welladay,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller;—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair,
Than these words—"I loved ONCE."

And who saith, "I loved ONCE?"
Not angels, whose clear-eyes, love, love, foresee,
Love through eternity,
Who, by To Love, do apprehend To Be.
Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name,—casting
A light too broad for blasting!
The great God, changing not from everlasting,
Saith never, "I loved ONCE."

Nor ever the "Loved ONCE,"
Dost THOU say, Victim-Christ, misprized friend!
The cross and curse may rend;
But, having loved, Thou lovest to the end!
It is man's saying—man's! Too weak to move
One spherèd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
With his No more, and Once.

How say ye, "We loved once,"
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each other so?
And could ye say of some, whose love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone,
Such words, "We loved them ONCE?"

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
Say calm of *me*, sweet friends, when out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy light?
And when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye "We loved her once,"
Say cold of me, when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay?
When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?—
Not so! not then—*least* then! when life is shriven,
And Death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in Heaven,
Say not, "We loved them once."

Say never, ye loved ONCE!
God is too near above, the grave, below,
And all our moments go
Too quickly past our souls, for saying so!
The mysteries of Life and Death avenge
Affections light of range—
There comes no change to justify that change,
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE.

And yet that word of ONCE
Is humanly acceptive! Kings have said,
Shaking a discrowned head,
"We ruled once,"—idiot tongues, "We once bested,"—
Cripples once danced i' the vines—and bards approved,
Were once by scornings, moved!
But love strikes one hour—LOVE. Those *never* loved,
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

A Rhapsody of Life's Progress.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."
POEMS ON MAN, *by Cornelius Matthews.**

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange!
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,
Which smiles with a change!
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces;
The heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth!
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found:—
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four—
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore.

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther:
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,—
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical fine;
And the cedars are brushing the archangel's feet;
And time is eternity,—love is divine,
And the world is complete!
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
And the earth rings again!
And we breathe out, "O beauty,"—we cry out, "O truth,"
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine;

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable, in thought and manner, for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder.

And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline,—
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation, and what this despair—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair, as we climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon;
And we think him so near, he is this side the sun!
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures,
Which hideth the soul!
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad watercourse,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out with a wound;
And we shout so aloud, "We exult, we rejoice,"
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around,—
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice—
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears,
Yet we are not ashamed;
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
Help us, God! trust us, man! love us, woman! "I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
I love thee, I leave thee,—
Live for thee, die for thee!
I prove thee, deceive thee,—
Undo evermore thee!

Help me, God! slay me, man!—one is mourning for both!"
And we stand up, though young, near the funeral-sheet
Which covers the Cæsar and old Pharamond:
And death is so nigh us, Life cools from its heat—
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair,—*art* thou sweet?

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect—
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds;
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked;
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,—
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole,—
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
"Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity!
Speed me, God! serve me, man!—I am god over men!
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again—
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet!"—
O thou Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

Then we grow into thought,—and with inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our Being!
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,—
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides,
With its infinite tides,
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through all the dim rolling, we hear the sweet calling

Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-tongue,
The interpretive sense of the mystical march :
And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer,—
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung."
And we smile in our thought, if they answer or no,—
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know !
Wonders breathe in our face,
And we ask not their name ;
And love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place.
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud ;
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts,
Untired through the cloud,
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts :
Yet the angels look down, and the mortals look up,
As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
'Twixt the Heavens and the earth, *can* a poet despond ?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken ;
And bringing our lives to the level of others,
Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
"Help me, God ! love me, man !—I am man among men,—
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's !"
From the fire and the water we drive out the steam,
With a rush and a roar, and the speed of a dream !
And the car without horses, the car without wings,
Roars onward and flies
On its pale iron edge,
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes—
And the hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies—
And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,

Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers ;
While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
By Humanity's hum at the root of the springs !
And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,
And teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
"God," "Liberty," "Truth,"—which they hearken and think,
And work into harmony, link upon link,
Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric respondence intense
On the dark of eclipse.
Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion,—the new generations that cry
In attune to our voice and harmonious reply,
"God," "Liberty," "Truth !"
We are glorious forsooth—
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned !
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Help me, God—help me, man ! I am low, I am weak—
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins ;
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains,
From my spirit's serene ;
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
On my organised clay.
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away !
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
On the Heaven-heights of Truth !
Oh, the soul keeps its youth—
But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,—
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal ;

It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold—
It sinks back, with the death in its face!
On, chariot—on, soul,—
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

Love us, God, love us, man! we believe, we achieve—
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond—
We are glorious—and DIE!
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie!
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

L. E. L.'s Last Question.

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"
(*From her Poem written during the Voyage to the Cape.*)

"Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?"—She said it from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy;
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
Her heart grew dark,—and groped there as the blind,
To reach, across the waves, friends left behind—
"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

It seemed not much to ask—As *I* of *you?*—
We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes, that question over,—
And little in the world, the Loving do,

But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

Love-learned, she had sung of love and love,—
And, like a child, that, sleeping with dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,—
When nightly gestes and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes,
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
She asked not,—Do you praise me, O my land?—
But,—"Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?"

Her's was the hand that played for many a year
Love's silver phrase for England,—smooth and well!
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
In that lone moment, might confirm her dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response,—"We think of *thee*,"—
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
Was she content—content—with ocean's sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
Those stars, content—where last her song had gone,—
They, mute and cold in radiant life,—as soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome death?*

* Her lyric on the polar star, came home with her latest papers.

Bring your vain answers—cry, "We think of *thee!*"
How think ye of her? warm in long ago
Delights?—or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,—
With all her visions unfulfilled, save one—
Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in the sun—
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

"Do ye think of me as I think of you?"—
O friends,—O kindred,—O dear brotherhood
Of all the world! what are we, that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other, when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
Is this "Think of me as I think of you."

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die
A vocal pathos rolls! and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all, tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing, saith,
Do you think of Me as I think of you?

The House of Clouds.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
For my thoughts to live in;
When for earth too fancy-loose,
And too low for Heaven!
Hush! I talk my dream aloud—
I build it bright to see,—
Build it on the moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with *thee.*

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
Faced with amber column,—
Crowned with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn!
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
Pale and glimmering;
With a sunbeam hid in each,
And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and eke brightening,—
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veined by the lightning!
Use one with an iris-stain,
For the door within;
Turning to a sound like rain,
As we enter in!

Enter a broad hall thereby,
Walled with cloudy whiteness:
Tis a blue place of the sky,
Wind-worked into brightness;
Whence such corridors sublime
Stretch, with winding stairs—
Praying children wish to climb
After their own prayers.

In the mutest of the house,
I will have my chamber:
Round its door I keep for use
Northern lights of amber.
Silence gave that rose and bee
For the lock, in meteness;
And the turning of the key
Goes in humming sweetness.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close but soundless,—glorified
When the sunbeams come here—

Wandering harpers, harping on
  Chorded drops, as such,—
Drawing colours, for a tune,
  With a vibrant touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
  From the chestnut forest,—
Bring a purple from the hill,
  When the heat is sorest,—
Spread them out from wall to wall,
  Carpet-wove around,—
Whereupon the foot shall fall
  In light instead of sound.

Bring the fantasque cloudlets home,
  From the noontide zenith ;
Ranged, for sculptures, round the room,—
  Named as Fancy weeneth :
Some be Junos, without eyes—
  Naiads, without sources—
Some be birds of paradise,—
  Some, Olympian horses.

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
  Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
  From the lilies' edges :
From our England's field and moor,
  Bring them calm and white in,—
Whence to form a mirror pure,
  For Love's self-delighting !

Bring a grey cloud from the east,
  Where the lark is singing,—
Something of the song at least,
  Unlost in the bringing :
That shall be a morning chair,
  Poet-dream may sit in,
When it leans out on the air,
  Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sun!
While he sinketh, catch it—
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest Thought,
At the curfew-sounding,—
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh!
'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
As in April weather!
Corridor and column proud,
Chamber bright to see—
Gone!—except that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with *thee!*

Let them! Wipe such visionings
From the Fancy's cartel—
Love secures some fairer things
Dowered with his immortal!
Suns may darken,—heaven be bowed—
Still, unchanged shall be,—
Soul-deep,—*here*—that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with THEE!

Catarina to Camoens;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long—adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
Death is near me,—and not *you!*

Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours,—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
"Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, HIS have seen!"

But all changeth! At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door!
If you stood there, would you whisper
"Love, I love you," as before,—
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest, ever seen?

Yes! I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has forgone them
Would be gathered back anew
They would truly
Be as duly

Love-transformed to Beauty's sheen, —
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

But, ah me! you only see me
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan,—
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love, to help my bale—
O my poet,
Come and show it!
Come of latest love to glean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

No reply! The fountain's warble
In the courtyard sounds alone!
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan,
From love-sighing
To this dying!
Death forerunneth Love, to win
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

Will you come? when I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid—
When thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid.
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry beneath the cypress green—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—"Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

When beneath the palace-lattice,
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there—*that* is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
"Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

When the palace ladies sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
"Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,"—
Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

Sweetest eyes! How sweet in flowings,
The repeated cadence is!

Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise, intervene—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,—
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn high than these!
Miserere
For the weary—
Oh, no longer for Catrine,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

Keep my riband! take and keep it,—
I have loosed it from my hair;*
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,—
Since with saintly
Watch, unfaintly,
Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
Up to Heaven, they glisten fast—
You may cast away, Beloved,
In your future, all my past;
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss,
If a tear be on your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS!

* She left him the riband from her hair.

Death hath boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

I will look out to his future—
I will bless it till it shine!
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

A Portrait.

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her!
Ten times have the lilies blown
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear—
Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks, encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air!

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,—
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure!

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
Which comes softly—just as *she*,
When she nestles at your knee!

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—"You have done a
Consecrated little Una!"

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
"'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger,—when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleeken every word,—
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love her!"—
Ay, and certes, in good sooth,
We may all be sure He DOTH.

Sleeping and Watching.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing,—
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in!
On your curls' full roundness, stand
Golden lights serenely—
One cheek, pushed out by the hand
Folds the dimple inly:
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half-shut,
Slants the shining azure;—

Open-souled in noonday sun,
So, you lie and slumber!
Nothing evil, having done,
Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth,—
I will smile too! Patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.
"Nay, keep sleeping, before loss;
I shall sleep though losing!
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

And God knows, who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure;—
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly!
Differing in this that *you*
Clasp your playthings sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping;

Differing in this, that *I*
Sleeping, shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder!
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me?

Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while I, you, draw withal
From your slumber, solely,—
Me, from mine, an angel shall,
With reveillie holy!

Wine of Cyprus.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, ESQ., AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC., TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

If old Bacchus were the speaker,
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker,
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge!

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler,
When the drink is so divine;
And some deep-mouthed Greek exampler
Would become your Cyprian wine!
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
Drinking rivers down his beard.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out;
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat!

While the Naiads like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry—"O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste!"

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink;
And my lips are pale and earthy,
To go bathing from this brink!
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms;
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learned silence at the tombs.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the brow!
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek?

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed!
I am sad-voiced as the turtle,
Which Anacreon used to feed:
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,—
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

Go!—let others praise the Chian!—
This is soft as Muses' string—
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as its spring,—
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet!

And the brown bees of Hymettus
  Make their honey not so sweet.

Very copious are my praises,
  Though I sip it like a fly!—
Ah! but, sipping,—times and places
  Change before me suddenly—
As Ulysses' old libation
  Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprian wine, dear Græcian,
  Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings
  Which my Thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
  Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.
Past the pane, the mountain spreading,
  Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,—
  Somewhat low for *αι*'s and *οι*'s!

Then what golden hours were for us!—
  While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
  Seemed to wave up a live air!
How the cothurns trod majestic
  Down the deep iambic lines?
And the rolling anapæstic
  Curled, like vapour over shrines!

Oh, our Æschylus, the thundrous!
  How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
  In the gnarled oak beneath.
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal!
  Who was born to monarch's place—
And who made the whole world loyal,
  Less by kingly power than grace.

Our Euripides, the human—
With his droppings of warm tears;
And his touches of things common,
Till they rose to touch the spheres!
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

And my Plato, the divine one,—
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light—
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek:
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak!

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
With his glorious mouth of gold—
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old:
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies!—
Who forged first his linkèd stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius,
For the fire shot up his odes!
Though the Church was scarce propitious,
As he whistled dogs and gods,—
And we both praised Nazianzen,
For the fervid heart and speech!
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

Do you mind that deed of Até
Which you bound me to, so fast—

Reading "De Virginitate,"
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?

For we sometimes gently wrangled;
Very gently, be it said,—
For our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread!
And, I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

For the rest!—a mystic moaning,
Kept Cassandra at the gate!
With wild eyes the vision shone in—
And wide nostrils scenting fate!
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

And Medea we saw, burning
At her nature's planted stake!
And proud Œdipus, fate-scorning,
While the cloud came on to brake—
While the cloud came on slow—slower,
Till he stood discrowned, resigned!—
But the reader's voice dropped lower,
When the poet called him BLIND!

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
And more learned, and a man!—
Yet that shadow,—the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids,—ran

Both our spirits to one level;
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes, that *could not see.*

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed the fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,—
When we two sate in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine?

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus!—it is well—
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better œnomel!
And whoever be the speaker
None can murmur with a sigh,—
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly!

The Romance of the Swan's Nest.

"So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part."
WESTWOOD'S "*Beads from a Rosary.*"

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side, on the grass:
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by ;
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,—
And the smile, she softly useth,
Fills the silence like a speech ;
While she thinks what shall be done,—
And the sweetest pleasure, chooseth,
For her future within reach !

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooseth . . . "I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds !
He shall love me without guile ;
And to *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath,—
And the lute he plays upon,
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

"And the steed, it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind !
And the hoofs, along the sod,
Shall flash onward in a pleasure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

"But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face !
He will say, 'O love, thine eyes

Build the shrine my soul abides in ;
And I kneel here for thy grace.'

"Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,—
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand—
Till I answer, 'Rise, and go !
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

"Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say—
Nathless, maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'
I will utter and dissemble—
'Light to-morrow, with to-day.'

"Then he will ride through the hills,
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong !
To make straight distorted wills,—
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

"Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain,
And kneel down beside my feet—
'Lo ! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ?'

"And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
And the second time, a glove !
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer, 'Pardon—
If he comes to take my love.'

"Then the young foot-page will run—
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee!
'I am a duke's eldest son!
Thousand serfs do call me master,—
But, O Love, I love but *thee!*'

"He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover,
Through the crowds that praise his deeds!
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds."

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,—
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the *two*.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse
Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads—
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops!
Lo! the wild swan had deserted—
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

Ellie went home sad and slow!
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not! but I know
She could show him never—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

Lessons from the Gorse.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart."
LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses ever-golden !
Cankered not the whole year long !
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hillside of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms !
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms ?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth, that Beauty liveth still !

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the first fruit Wisdom reaches
Hath the hue of childly cheek ?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek !

Mountain gorses ! since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new,—
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world ! they are not tears, but dew.

The Dead Pan.

Excited by Schiller's "Götter Griechenlands," and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ("De Oraculorum Defectu"), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.—E. B. B.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas!
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,—
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun!—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Said the old Hellenic tongue!
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—
Since Pan is dead?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenched locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?—
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye.
For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunder-stroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye.
For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills,
Of the everlasting hills.
Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities—
Now Pan is dead!

Jove! that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail:
While, in idiocy of godhead,
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan is dead

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands;
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown iron
Pallas' broad blue eyes eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the God-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own vines!
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,—
"Evohe—ah—evohe—"
Ah, Pan is dead.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone:
And old Pluto, deaf and silent,
Is cast out into the sun.
Ceres smileth stern thereat,—
"We *all* now are desolate—"
Now Pan is dead.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snowstorm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes! Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay! Pan is dead.

Crowned Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head :
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed :
Scornful children are not mute,—
" Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead."

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse ?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery !
For Pan is dead.

Gods ! we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign :
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine !
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie !
Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn :
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn—
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

Gods bereaved, gods belated,—
With your purples rent asunder !
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder !
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilèd Dark behind:
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place:
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
And sank slowly through the air;
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross—
When His brow was chill with dying,
And his soul was faint with loss;
When his priestly blood dropped downward,
And his kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

By the love He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead stood complete:
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat—
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine!
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine:
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only.
Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
Her lost god's forsaking look,
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror
And her crispy fillets shook—
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice,
Whence libations ran of yore.
See! the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must!
Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,—
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True,—
We will weep *not* . . . !—earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth :
And those debonaire romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run !
Look up, poets, to the sun !
Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessed mysteries.
And a Priest's Hand, through creation,
Waveth calm and consecration—
And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair : should we forego it ?
Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
God Himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame ! to stand in His creation
And doubt Truth's sufficiency !—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead.

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure—
All of praise that hath admonisht,—
All of virtue, shall endure,—
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses—
Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing;
Nor mix falsehood with the whole!
Look up Godward! speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul!
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
Pan, Pan is dead.

THE END.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON.